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*Dialogue
and
Destiny*

ALBERT EDWARD DAY

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DIALOGUE AND DESTINY

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To

ALLEN E. CLAXTON

Friend

in Dialogue and Discovery

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PRELUDE

The world is full of discussion and debate, denunciation and dogma, campaign oratory and drawing room clichés, polite comment and conventional observation. But there is little of the dialogue that creatively brings together deep question and delivering answer, groping fancy and guiding faith, inquiring doubt and informed experience, cosy tradition and disturbing thrust of reality, conforming mediocrity and courageous deviation.

In a half century of association with people from all areas of life, it has been my good fortune to witness what genuine dialogue can do to enlarge mental and spiritual horizons, to help men in the discovery of their real selfhood, to enrich their fellowship with others, to quicken their knowledge of God and to stimulate their efforts toward a diviner society, all of which are essential to the fulfillment of human destiny.

This book is a humble but very serious attempt to define and illustrate the nature of deep dialogue and its immense contribution to human life. It is written to Everyman in the confidence that both intelligentsia and commoner could and should give to such dialogue a larger role in their lives; and that, by so doing, they will move the more surely toward the realization of God's loving purpose for them and their fellows.

My profound thanks are offered to the frank and fearless and humble and loving people who have shared with me their strongest convictions and their most cherished values and, in so doing, have modified for the better my own convictions, have greatly enriched my own world of values, and have in ways innumerable added new dimensions to my faith in the God unveiled in Jesus Christ my Lord. May God reward them through all eternity even as I bless their memory at every thought of them.

Also, my thanks to the authors and publishers who have granted me the privilege of quotation from their works. My debt to the editorial staff of Harper & Brothers is very great. Mrs. Bert K. Smith, Jr., has rendered invaluable assistance in preparing my manuscript for the printer.

ALBERT EDWARD DAY

June, 1961

Dialogue and Destiny

ONE

The Meaning of Destiny

Dialogue and destiny. Without real dialogue, we shall miss our destiny. Without a sound conception of our destiny, real dialogues will be infrequent if not impossible. Dialogue for destiny; destiny by dialogue. That is what this book is about.

Your destiny. Mine. What is it? In the answer to that lies the meaning or meaninglessness of life! When we have answered that, we must examine the nature of life-making dialogue.

We know what existence is—a medley of joy and sorrow, fellowship and loneliness, exciting adventure and monotonous drudgery, victory and defeat, honor and dishonor, fulfillment and frustration, dreams and despairs.

Is it *destined* to be so? Or is it the result of our own mishandling of life? Or is it the impact of the egocentricity and ignorance and sheer cruelty of others? Or is it “just the way the ball bounces” in a world where there are balls and walls and blind energies innumerable and incalculable? And will it go on this way forever, with only the certainty of uncertainty spinning out an endless tale of collisions and catastrophes, with an occasional interlude of accidental creation?

MISINTERPRETATIONS

That all that is and is to be, has been divinely decreed, is an intolerable idea. I once asked a prominent minister if he really believed that some people were chosen for salvation and the rest given a cold shoulder by the only One who could save them from eternal disaster. He answered that he firmly believed just that. But he added

with an apologetic smile: "Of course it is not a good doctrine to preach." I should say not! Not good for the preacher. Not good for the congregation. Not good for those who never hear a sermon, or who, having heard, have decided that they do not want to listen to any more for a long, long time! It is not good for anyone who is trying to frame a worthy conception of God or seeking to work out a stimulating philosophy of life. It is a doctrine of intellectual confusion, of moral paralysis, of spiritual desperation!

Nor can we believe that the earthly hells into which we are often plunged have been the direct will of God for us; that all sickness and pain and heartache and bereavement and failure and defeat have been a divine visitation upon our mortal career. There are grievous consequences that follow the disregard of physical and moral laws. There are events and experiences which we rightly call divine judgments, in the sense that in them we see the outworking of the basic structures with which God has surrounded us. But it is not true that God destined us for such miseries or that they would have befallen us no matter what our behavior.

Likewise, we dare not say that any heavens we enter, here or in the sweet by-and-by, were arbitrarily set up by divine power, and that divine intervention thrust us into them. Wealth or health or status or power are no evidence that the possessors are God's pets, selected by Him for such favors over all others who strove and sought in vain. Our lot has not been allotted to us in any such arbitrary fashion. Destiny is not a divine distribution of weal and woe, with which we ourselves have nothing to do. The kingdom of God is neither an acquisitive nor a distributive society, functioning under a divine dictator without whose word nothing happens for good or for ill.

Of our own mishandling of life, there can be no doubt. Nor can we doubt that the mishandling is the cause of many of our misfortunes.

The tissue of the life to be
We weave with colors all our own,
And in the field of destiny
We reap as we have sown.¹

That is not the whole truth, by a long mile. But it is some of the truth. Who that has suffered cannot recall the mistakes and sins

which have been partly responsible for it? Who that has triumphed cannot adduce the efforts and self-denials which have been factors in the victory? In a real sense, our destiny lies in part within ourselves. Jean Rice in John Osborne's *The Entertainer* wails: "Here we are alone in the universe, there's no God, it just seems that it all began by something as simple as sunlight striking on a piece of rock. And here we are. We've got only ourselves. Somehow we've just got to make a go of it. *We've only ourselves.*"² Thank God that is not true. There are others—and the Other! But we do have ourselves, and a heavy responsibility it is! Because we have not mastered that responsibility, our plight is often pathetic if not tragic. Fate is not altogether to blame. Folly and faithlessness are also guilty. If, as Henley said, "Fate's a fiddler, Life's a dance,"³ we pay the fiddler and we can call the tune, or refuse to dance, or whistle a tune of our own and dance to that!

Even this is not the whole story. We, ourselves, and our lives are not wholly of our own making. Our ancestors have had much to do with us. The genes, which they passed on to us, may grant us genius, but they may also set severe limits to our achievements. They may impose deformities. They may determine whether we are cerebrotonics (eggheads) or viscerotonics (sentimentalists) or somatotonics (activists), or some of all three! We may have some control over the contents of the egghead, the depth or shallowness of our sentiments, the madness or moderation of our athleticism, but we cannot alter our basic structure.

Our environment has inserted its own woof into the warp of our inherited characteristics, and for some of it we are grateful. It has contributed tendencies and demeanors and aspirations which have been tremendous assets in the struggle of life. But it has also inflicted psychic wounds, begotten inferiority feelings, created neuroses, imposed fears which haunt our days and nights. It has quenched initiative, smothered aspiration, poisoned us with prejudice. It has made us color blind and then paradoxically compelled us to look at everything through its own colored glasses. It has set, below the level of consciousness, compulsions which drive us in directions we do not want to go, and when we arrive at unwelcome destinations, we wonder how in the world we got there.

A truly Christian minister, who was reared in southern United

States, said to me: "When I meet a colored minister on the street, my intelligence tells me that he is as good as I am. My conscience tells me that I should shake hands with him, and I usually do. But every time I do, something turns over inside me, and I do not understand why!"

Another man came to me for help with his marital problem. At first, he loved his wife. Then his love grew cold. He was ashamed. He avowed that she was a good woman, and I knew that she was. He tried to overcome his aversions and his indifference, and to rekindle the old flame within. But he could not. His psychiatrist sought the reason. So did I. We were confronted with a situation which mere resolution could not remedy. Why?

A woman found herself driven beyond her strength and beyond all reasonable interpretations of duty. She could not enjoy a trip away from home and work because of a sense of being fugitive from the family's need. In her sleep, she would hear voices calling for help and would start on a somnambulistic journey in an effort to answer the imperious call. She never could feel that she deserved the kindness of others, but must forever be going beyond the call of duty to merit a smile or an appreciative word. Why?

The "why" in these and many other cases lies in the impact of environment upon the psyche of the individual concerned. It is something which one could not avoid, usually occurring in childhood, and which has hindered growth, crippled effort, imposed a struggle that has consumed energies needed elsewhere.

Life is often turned in unanticipated and unwanted directions by forces outside oneself. Sometimes the outcome is so splendid that men do not speak of destiny but of God. Frederick W. Robertson, the great British preacher of another generation, credited his entrance into the ministry to the barking of a dog. He had intended to become a soldier. Then one night, the barking of a dog disturbed a sick child. The disturbance resulted in an interview and then an acquaintance and an influence that changed his life plan, and sent into the pulpit instead of to the battlefield a man whose message still stirs our minds and hearts.

Sometimes these external forces issue in conditions so terrible that the word "demonic" seems the only apt characterization of them. The thousands who were beaten to a pulp under the clubs of Nazi

sadists, starved into skeletons in concentration camps, jammed into the charnel house of suffocating gas ovens, their modesty outraged and their virtue raped by roaring bulls in the guise of men; the millions deprived of home and hope by the ravings of a megalomaniac and the ruthlessness of the fanatic minions who obeyed him as if he were the German Messiah—what could these pathetic, broken, shattered brothers and sisters of ours think of their tragic lot except that it was *fate*, as senseless and horrible as the raging of a volcano or the devastation of a tornado? It just happened that they were in its path. No fault of their own brought them there and no valor or virtue of theirs could change one element in the pitiless mystery!

However, the word “destiny” does not belong even here. Hitler was not destined to ravish the world as he so horribly did. Nor were his helpless victims destined for such wretchedness and terror and doom. The German people, who traded their postwar miseries and poverties and despairs for Hitler’s version of a “kingdom that would last for a thousand years,” were co-operators and in the end co-conspirators in the nightmare of pain and death. And the rest of us, who dealt harshly with Germany in her defeat in the First World War, and who failed to rise above the ethic of revenge into the ethic of compassion and forgiveness, cannot wholly escape responsibility before God for the rape of civilization and the return of barbarism. All that was *not* the divine intention, but “man’s inhumanity to man” that “makes countless thousands mourn.”⁴ It was not a destiny which God imposed upon the world. It was in part deviltry which men inflicted upon their fellows!

Nor can we believe that any of the evils of life, the circumstances that frustrate our own dedications to the good, the coincidences that slam the doors of opportunity in our faces and leave us wailing on the doorstep, the malformations that make childbirth a tragedy in a home, the untimely deaths that shatter family circles and thrust children out onto the uncaring streets, the mischances that make us miss important turnings in the road and leave us like lost wanderers in an uninhabited wilderness, or any of the other real disasters that beset our pilgrimage, are divine destinies. They are evils for God as well as for us. They are events He did not intend. They are calamities which make it harder for Him to bring us to the destinies which His love desires for us all!

THE REAL MEANING

This book keeps the word "destiny" for *the purpose in the heart of God* which inspired creation, guided the long path of creative evolution, brought man upon the scene, gave rise to consciousness, nurtured conscience, communicated the idea of God, fostered worship, rebuked pride and self-will, sent gleams of immortality to lure men to the heights, finally gave Jesus Christ to challenge sin with holiness and, by suffering love, to woo men to Himself, transform them into His own likeness, make them in turn loving, effective servants and helpful comrades of their fellows, members of the Beloved Community of the forgiven and the forgiving, to whom have been unveiled the enchanting possibilities of eternal life with Him and with the whole company of the redeemed.

That is what this book is about. That is our divinely *intended* destiny, our divinely *offered* destiny, our divinely *assured* destiny, if we will *heroically respond* to His dream and *humbly receive* His grace to make possible the necessary co-operation involved in costly reappraisal and revolutionary repentance and intelligent dedication.

The New Testament uses what to us, moderns, is often strange language to depict that destiny. Ponder some of its utterances. We shall examine them in the light of human experience as we know it and as it may become for us all:

The magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians . . .

Your real reward, a heavenly one, will come from God . . .

Whatever we may go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us.

These little troubles (which are really so transitory) are winning for us a permanent, glorious and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain.

If our earthly dwelling were taken down, like a tent, we have a permanent house in Heaven, made, not by man, but by God . . .

We are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

I have become absolutely convinced that neither death nor life, . . . neither what happens today nor what may happen tomorrow, . . . nor

anything else in God's whole world has any power to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord!

And the secret is simply this: Christ *in you*! Yes, Christ *in you* bringing with him the hope of all the glorious things to come.

We are handicapped on all sides but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!⁵

THE CONTRADICTIONS OF LIFE

Faith in such a destiny often seems mocked by the grim facts of life. Thomas Hardy's classic novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, closes the sad story of innocence pursued, betrayed, mistreated, and finally doomed, with the cynical observation: "'Justice' was done, and the President of the Immortals . . . had ended his sport with Tess."⁶ Often enough, aye, too often for our sensitive hearts, it *seems* as if God were merely engaged in rough sport with men and women who deserve better.

Albert Camus, of our own day, writes *The Stranger*, a book which has already gone through many printings. It is about another hapless individual, not innocent like Tess, but stalked by life and ending at last on the gallows for a pointless murder. The prison chaplain comes to offer him the help of God: "All the men I have seen in your position turned to Him in their time of trouble." The condemned man tries to explain that he has very little time left and isn't "going to waste it on God." At the end, he finds his only modicum of relief by opening his heart to what he calls "the benign indifference of the universe," saying that all that remained was the hope that on the day of his execution "there would be a huge crowd of spectators and that they would greet him with howls of execration."⁷ Who has not at times been impressed with what seems to be total indifference to his plight, but has found no relief whatsoever in the bitter fact?

Balzac could arrive at no better appraisal of man's situation than that of "a clown dancing on the edge of an abyss." George Dillon, in John Osborne's *Epitaph*, sees the human lot as something which the average person cannot face "without drugging himself up to the rings round his eyes with a lot of comforting myths."⁸ A *New Yorker* cartoon pictures John Q. Citizen, home from work at the

end of another day of grim struggle, sitting on the edge of his chair, fist clenched, eyes staring in protest at life as presented in the newspaper piled on the floor about him. His wife appears from the kitchen, wiping a dinner dish, and aware of his misery, asks, "Why can't you lead a life of quiet desperation like everybody else?"

In such vignettes appearing here and there, one catches a glimpse of our human plight as it presents itself to observers and participants alike. Any dancing is that of a fool on the edge of an abyss; any comfort is the dubious opiate of a myth; any quietness is that of the desperation which is only smothered anger.

If one chooses to do so, he can find even more challenging denials of the New Testament concept of human destiny under God. There are philosophers whose logic discovers no light. There are existentialists who see only the estrangements which curse our journey in time and space. There are cynics who point with scornful finger to the dark hemispheres where men have suffered and expired in agony.

What is written here is written in full recognition of all the grim realities which have oppressed others and have darkened their horizons and have driven them to conclude that man is a pitiful creature, in a hopeless stance of courage and nobility and dreams against a hostile or indifferent universe.

OFFERED DESTINY

What is affirmed here is that both here and yonder there is a destiny *offered* that gives meaning to it all.

Careless seems the great Avenger; history's pages but record One death-grapple in the darkness 'twixt old systems and the Word;⁹ yet even in the darkness there is light. The Word is always grappling with systems that cripple and deform and destroy. In that endless grapple, grace is given to the victims, grace to endure, grace to triumph, grace to give witness to the "Light that follows all our way."¹⁰ Chained in prisons dark, men and women alike are "in heart and conscience free,"¹¹ free from terror, free from bitterness, free from a sense of defeat, because they have a sense of belonging to One who has overcome the world.

Alexis Baron von Ronne, just before being hanged by the Nazis, wrote to his wife: "In a moment now I shall be going home to our Lord in complete calm and in the certainty of salvation. . . . If you only knew with what inconceivable loyalty He is standing by my side at this moment, you would be armored and calm for all your difficult life. He will give you strength for everything."¹² Baron von Ronne would not have chosen such a transit from time. Nor could he have wanted to leave a beloved wife and two lovely children to face the world without his presence and care. Nor did God "destine" him for such an end. But when the end came in the Nazi terror, he did enter into a destiny offered by a loving God, who was there to make his last hour in his cell an hour of strength and beauty, to walk with him to the scaffold, and, while the hangman was encircling his neck with the noose, to lay a crown of glory upon his brow and in one breathless moment usher him into eternal joy!

Worldly success is a fickle god. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ has little truck with him. Our God is He who takes failure and weaves out of its shreds a robe of righteousness. In the presence of disaster, He places a scepter of power in our hands and sends us on our way to unguessed doxologies. Even our inferiorities seem to give Him a chance to do for us what cannot be done for those whose greater capacities could render significant service to mankind, but who have permitted those capacities to make them proud and self-centered and self-sufficient. Is there any minister who has not seen the "poor in spirit" taken up into such a destiny? Do not the rest of us cherish the memory of rich service to the community, rendered by dear people whose purse was nearly always empty and whose person was devoid of any suspicion of brilliance, but who had entered into the destiny of grace? They could not make speeches or marshal battalions or run organizations or devise strategies for spectacular advance, but they could pray and love. They could wait on table and also wait upon God. They were "the sweet presence of a good diffused, and in diffusion ever more intense."¹³ The minister always preached more effectively when their pew was occupied—and it usually was! The communion service seemed more the occasion of the Presence, if they were present. The prayer meet-

ing became a Bethel when they entered. Just to meet them upon the street was to breathe a moment of heaven!

So this destiny which God offers is not something available merely for the fortunate. It *can* make a home in this homeless world. It is granted to those to whom the world seems to have refused the grant of anything really desirable from the world's point of view. It is not only the enhancement of the best but the redemption of the worst that may attend this earthly pilgrimage! It is not merely the toothsome dessert that tops off a good meal; it is often the meal that otherwise would be only crumbs from poverty's empty larder. It has wrought its divine magic in prison cell and concentration camp. It has given songs in a night that would otherwise have been despair-ridden blackness, filled only with the wail of broken hearts. It made a Paul raise his memorable paean of triumph after his most grueling experiences. Recall his own autobiography;

I have worked harder than any of them.

I have served more prison sentences!

I have been beaten times without number.

I have faced death again and again.

I have been beaten the regulation thirty-nine stripes by the Jews five times.

I have been beaten with rods three times.

I have been stoned once.

I have been beaten with rods three times.

In my travels I have been in constant danger from rivers and floods, from bandits, from my own countrymen, and from pagans. I have faced danger in city streets, danger in the desert, danger on the high seas, danger among false Christians. I have known exhaustion, pain, long vigils, hunger and thirst, . . . cold and lack of clothing.¹⁴

Would any one of you like to trade places with him? Yet listen: "In all these things we win an overwhelming victory through Him who has proved His love for us!"¹⁵ This offer of destiny is not a fairy tale. It has demonstrated its reality in the most adverse circumstances. It has created heavens in the midst of the worst hells. It has made the beatnik's pad seem the silly exhibitionism of an irresponsible and unnecessary surrender to cynicism and gloom. It has borne witness to the meaningfulness of life even where life has become darkest tragedy. It has imparted glory to the most drab and dolorous

situations. It has woven halos out of thorns and built thrones out of hideous instruments of torture.

ETERNAL DESTINY

When one dares to venture out on the hypothesis that God is, and is what Jesus declared Him to be, and has made us to be His comrades forever; when, inspired by that faith, one conceives that this life on earth is not the last but merely the first act in the drama which is not only human but divine, one rests assured that the destiny which beckons him is worthy of the God of all destinies. One does not therefore engage in the fabrication of a fabled heaven but one does find life here, though often dangerous, always exciting. It may exact the last ounce of strength one can command, but it is always exhilarating. It may often evoke a flood of tears, but those tears become "the finest of foils for laughter."¹⁶ The phraseology of the Bible comes alive. One reads again the passages quoted earlier, and finds stirring in his breast the same joyous anticipation of the future and the same transworldly confidence about work and sweat and struggle and sorrow in this world.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee. . . .

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Charges, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears. . . .

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.¹⁷

In such a faith, man's destiny becomes neither the grim nor the gilded goal often associated with the word. Existence in God, here and yonder, is all that the most devout can ask and vastly more than our poor imagination can conceive. It is more, infinitely more, than any future which man might make for himself, no matter how gifted or heroic or ingenious he may be. It must have the solidity

and spaciousness and spirituality, the healthy beauty and holy joy of God himself.

This is what destiny means in its fullest dimensions. Could anything be more challenging or comforting or exhilarating? Especially to those of us who have taken the measure of our own lives and with utter realism have come face to face with our own failures and sins, our own strivings and derelictions, our own best achievements measured by the unachieved vast which our critical judgment has unveiled to us!

Most of us recognize our kinship with Browning's "Paracelsus." His life had been a quest for knowledge, and not in vain. Much he had learned about love and power. Yet at the end he confesses:

In my own heart love had not been made wise . . .
To see good in evil, and a hope
In ill success; to sympathize, be proud
Of their half reasons, faint aspirings, dim
Struggles for truth, their poorest fallacies,
Their prejudice and fears and cares and doubts.

So came his last hour with a sense of failure. The high aim he set for his life was not enough. The destiny he sought did not suffice to justify his years and labors. "I have done well, yet not all well," he confesses. Still he is not appalled, for he avows:

But after, they will know me. If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time: I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day!¹⁸

I shall emerge one day! That is the divine destiny offered us all. We, too, must often stoop into tremendous seas of cloud, so dark that it seems impossible ever to emerge. The best of us can scarcely know content as we remember what we have been and done. Canon Charles E. Raven, Cambridge Scholar, Regius Professor of Divinity, spiritual leader of the Church of England, wrote of the bitter hours between three and four in the morning when his own eyes were opened "to the vast selfishness and consequent hurtfulness of one's life, to the multitude of opportunities misused, loyalties betrayed and relationships perverted."¹⁹ The unlived life often seems so

much greater than that which, amid the toiling and the striving, we have arduously lived. "The unlit lamp and the ungirt loin" have meant darkness instead of light, defeat instead of victory. Made wiser by the years, we wish we could have more years to undo what has been done and to do what has been left undone. But time has run out, and we stand at the edge of the grave. We survey the canvas we have painted and discover lines not neatly and accurately drawn, colors thinly laid, lack of symmetry here and there. We could do so much better now, but the "now" is too soon to become "then" and the picture must remain what it is. We hear the songs we have written. There is harmony, no doubt; we have not labored wholly in vain. But there remain harsh notes. The melody lags in spots; it is a bit too folksy here and there; it lacks range and power. Here we wish for opportunity to listen longer until we hear "the lost chord" and then can weave something of its beauty and grandeur into every song we have given to the world! But that is not to be!

Some of us have come off rather well in our pilgrimage, but we crave to do much better. Is there anything else or more in the plan and purpose of God? Can we never finish what we here barely began? Is there a "land of beginning again" where all our poor, selfish griefs and phony grandeurs, can be dismissed except as a lesson on how not to do it?

The New Testament holds out a shining hope. Many of us are wagering our lives that the hope is not a will-o'-the-wisp. We move on toward the end of the road here, confident that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."²⁰ We lay down our worn-out tools and turn away from the unfinished statue without sadness because we believe that more excellent tools and flawless marble await our better artistry yonder. We say farewell to the books our lives have written, all too conscious of their faults, but also joyously awaiting the opportunity to think more clearly, experience more deeply, and express more perfectly the life which will unfold after "we shall see him as he is." We bid a loving farewell to the friends whose patience and trust and love and fidelity have helped us over the rough spots in the road and blessedly enriched the journey in pleasant places, because we expect to find them again and labor with them in "closer, dearer company"²¹ for-

ever! "Christians never say goodbye for the last time." There will be other times and better comradeships crowning the timelessness of eternity.

DOES MERCY END AT THE GRAVE?

What about those who have "not learned . . . that Life is ever lord of death and Love can never lose its own,"²² who have indeed failed to love either God or their fellow men, who have gone down into the darkness of the grave unconfessed and unshriven? Was their destiny forfeited finally? Has the offer of eternal life been withdrawn? Is doom their only prospect?

We must do some straight thinking here. In the Scriptures, we are confronted by frequent and poignant warnings of the fearful results of sin. We read there about judgment and hell. What does it all mean?

Sin is a terrible thing. I cannot conceive of an automatic translation of the unrepentant into the Kingdom of eternal grace and glory. Certainly there is hell in this life for rebels against God and love and truth and right. Every newspaper brings evidence of that. "Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell." That wail comes right out of life. If such a man departs from this world into whatever location, he carries hell with him, for hell is inside him. Hell is the inevitable lot of the person who has violated his own humanity, has blighted the humanity of others, and has excluded himself from the forgiving, healing love and life of God. John Ciardi, writing of the beatniks, comments that "what offered itself as intellectual refreshment has turned out to be little more than unwashed eccentricity," and that "one more Parnassus has turned out to be a grimy dive."²³ The story of the beatniks is the story of all that is rightly called sin. It promises big; it ends in the little. It offers refreshment; it actually gives unwashed dreariness! It boasts of freedom; it becomes the slave of drab conformities. The ecstasy it dreams about degenerates into a boredom that becomes an effort to escape somehow, somewhere. Sometimes it is marihuana, sometimes the cocktail, sometimes just the activity that dares not sit down and think, or let go that the God within may raise some questions! Yes, there is hell, and it is not a matter of location. It is a dislocation of the self that leaves one an orphan, a wastrel, a fugitive, a fevered moan in the

darkness, an ache for which there is no anodyne, a despair from which only God can rescue the hapless victim!

Is the time of rescue limited to life this side of the grave? Dare we say that? Can the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ forget any of His children, no matter if they wind up in the swine fields on another plane of existence? Can the Good Shepherd be content with the ninety and nine who are safe in the fold, while even one shaggy old sheep is lost on the mountains wild and bare? Hannah Hurnard has saved for us the story which she found in an American magazine lying in a window of a house in Nazareth, where Jesus once lived and loved. It was written by a mother whose son had gone wrong. He had become a hopeless drug addict. He had robbed her. He had joined a gang of burglars. He had been sent to an institution again and again in the hope of a cure, but as soon as he came out, he was given another injection of the dope by his old associates and was back at his old crimes again. At last he ran away. The social worker said to the mother: "There is only one thing for you to do now, *forget that you ever had a son!*"

Could a mother ever do that? Can God in His heaven forget the multitudes whose life on earth has made a hell for themselves? Can God possibly think: "They had their chance. There is nothing for me to do but shut them away from hope for all eternity. Too bad of course! But hell is hell and doom is doom. Judgment has been given. They have no excuse. I must not do anything more for them except to keep them alive to suffer forever!"

To be sure, to ask whether God can forget, or to speak of God as thinking in such terms, is to ask and to speak of Him as if He were man. God is God and not man. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."²⁴ The Incarnation means that God unveiled himself within the terms of human life, used human terminology to communicate to us His mind and heart. The Eternal Word spoke human language, answered man's finite questions, questioned man's equally finite answers, employed human experiences of thinking and feeling and acting as analogies of His own. He put new meaning into the vocabulary of that day, but He invented no new language. He used words about Himself that men had used about themselves, words that grew up out of man's very human life.

We must appreciate what the theologians mean when they talk about the transcendence of God, God Mysterious as over against God Manifest, the God beyond God. But if we are going to talk about God at all, we have to do it with words at hand, words which have come into being in the course of our very human life. Any analogies we employ have reference to something we have seen or known or imagined. Even our abstractions do not abstract from our speech everything human. They are still abstractions made by human minds to communicate with other human minds. We talk about the divine omniscience, but when we do so, we are thinking about a mind that knows all in contrast with the human mind that knows little. We call God love, but at best we are still taking a human experience of love at its best and using it to symbolize what is in the heart of God.

Those who write about judgment and eternal torment, who affirm that the grave ends our probation, who set time limits on the mercy and redeeming love of God, are still speaking after the manner of men. They are involved in ideas that are related to our human law-making, our courts of justice, our penal institutions, our point of no return for human offenders, our social structures where remission of penalty threatens the general security. They are impressed by the incapacity of human hearts to forgive violence and by the impossibility of a jurisprudence that can do any better than approximate justice and that dares not consider agape love as a guide for its decisions. Therefore, they cannot consistently hurl the charge of anthropomorphism at any of the rest of us who think in other human terms about the divine intention for us mortals, for that is what they themselves are doing and must do.

With genuine humility and deep reverence, this writer must declare another faith over against the declaration that God's mercy is bounded by the grave and that God's search for man ends with man's exit from this life.

This other faith is that God will continue His saving effort until the last person has either accepted His love or has finally said "no" to all that God is. Certainly there is here no lighthearted and no shallow-minded appraisal of sin and what it does to the sinner. There is full recognition of the inevitable consequences of turning away from the Source of all life and peace and joy and love. We have

said that it means hell. That is what hell is: separation from God, egoistic absorption that denies God access to the spirit. What men are here they will be there—until and unless the grace of God works its miracle within them. God cannot work such a miracle without man's consent and co-operation. Those who have given that consent and co-operation here will need only to continue to do so there. Those who have refused here will have to learn, by disciplines of inevitable suffering, a better way.

In this life, we have seen again and again that it has required shock, suffering, disillusionment of one kind or another, ere men who have spurned God will turn to Him "with hearty repentance and true faith." Why may it not be true that yonder, when men face the shock of afterdeath deprivation of that which has fascinated them here, the suffering of being left alone with their memories, the disillusionment of discovery that they have failed to find the meaning of life in the baubles that have monopolized their affections, they will then respond to the pursuing love of God with genuine repentance and answering faith?

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness, piece by piece, Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenseless utterly.²⁵

That has often been the story in this world. Why not in the world to come?

God "gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, . . ." ²⁶ What right have we to assume that there will be no inducement to believe in Him in the life to come?

God's purpose set forth in Christ was "to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things in the earth." Are all things united in Christ as long as millions are aloof from, or antagonistic to, Him?

"Therefore God has highly exalted him . . . that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."²⁷ What genuine bowing of the knee or what sincere confession of Christ or what glory of God the Father could there be among multitudes in hell? There could be compulsory forms of obeisance imposed by omnipotence among the eter-

nally damned. There might be the acknowledgment that they were helplessly and hopelessly subjected to Christ's wrathful power. There might even be recognition that their punishment is deserved. But what that could mean to God, it is difficult to see. Certainly it would have nothing of the jubilation and adoration which is portrayed in the exultation of the words of the Apostle! Either this amazing verse is the picture of a redeemed universe or it is the prophecy of a farce in which multitudes are compelled to go through the pretense of a worship that is the front for bitter rebellion.

There are sayings of Jesus which seem to justify the familiar belief in eternal punishment. But those reported sayings do not seem, to many of us, to outweigh the conclusions drawn from the announced purpose of His life and death, the immovable confidence He had in the outcome of his redemptive mission, or the demands of agape love which He believed to be the very nature of God. Matthew 25:46 speaks of those who will "go away into everlasting punishment." But the Greek word here does not mean "lasting forever." It is the word *aionois*. It really means "that which essentially belongs to and befits God." So, everlasting punishment means such punishment as befits God to give, befits God's nature and character. That nature and character are holy love. The punishment, therefore, will be not revengeful but remedial, not torturing but transforming, not destructive but disciplinary. Its purpose is "to unite all things in Christ."

There is cogency in the stirring exhortation of Nicolas Berdyaev:

Do not create hell by thrusting the "wicked" into it. Do not imagine the kingdom of God in too human a way as the victory of the "good" over the "wicked" and the isolation of the "good" in a place of light and of the "wicked" in a place of darkness. . . . As immanent in experience and as a consequence of the dark freedom that has to be lived through, hell exists, anyway, but we must not create it as a place of retribution in which the "wicked" are to be segregated from the "good." . . . We must not abandon to the devil greater and greater stretches of existence but must win them back for God. Hell is not a triumph for God—it is the triumph of the devil and non-being.²⁸

So when we think of our destiny, we must think of it in terms worthy of the God revealed in Christ. It reaches beyond this "wisp

of fog betwixt us and the sun.”²⁹ It is not an imposed destiny, but one that is offered by our Father. It is not an inevitability, but a gracious and dazzling possibility. It requires our assent. That assent in turn means more than an idle nod of the head. It really involves the consent of our whole being, intellectual conviction, moral dedication, spiritual discipline. It will bring us through painful awakenings, rigorous re-evaluation, costly repentances and restitutions, heroic battles with that dreadful trinity, “the world, the flesh and the devil.” It will require a grace which only God can supply.

It comes high, but it will be worth all it costs. Its realization is the meaning of life. Its prospect and possibility put a halo about every person, invest every essential task with significance, make fragrant every sacrifice, redeem every suffering, comfort every bereavement, floodlight the valley of the shadow, answer the riddles of earth with the raptures of eternity.

The very thought of it is exciting. If all of us could in some wonderful moment of truth catch a glimpse of it, we would shed our glooms, rise from our despairs, shake off our paralyses, and start on a determined journey to find it. Multitudes, pleased with their earthly toys, would abandon their playthings and begin the quest to which Divine Love invites us all.

For I have suffered loss and grievous pain,
The hurts of hatred and the world's disdain,
And wounds so deep that love, well-tried and pure,
Had not the power to ease them or to cure.

When all is done, say not my day is o'er,
And that through night I seek a dimmer shore;
Say rather that my morn has just begun,—
I greet the dawn and not a setting sun,
When all is done.³⁰

TWO

Dialogue

It is our faith that a great, divine destiny beckons us all. That destiny is not fate. Fate, if it means anything, means that which we have to be. Destiny, as we have defined it, means that which God intends us to be. God's intention for us is as wonderful as God Himself. That intention waits upon our co-operation but does not perish with our refusals nor die with our death. It is as indestructible as the love of God, and as eternal. I cannot conceive God as "giving up" on any of us. I can conceive man as finally saying to evil, "Be thou my good," and, by that mysterious thing we call "will," cutting himself off from God. If that ever happens, the result is not endless hell but ended life of any sort! Without God, life itself cannot continue. But as long as man's sovereign will does not sever every tie with God, then God will be at work to bring man into that relationship with Him in which lies the promise of glory. We are *invited* to the bliss of ever growing knowledge and ever deepening love in an ever widening fellowship!

A newly elected bishop of the Methodist church, on being interviewed by a reporter from the city to which the bishop had just been appointed, said: "My mission in Boston will be the same as it was in India, to fight despair. Despair is the disease of our time. I see it in the Broadway theater, I see it in our contemporary theater, I see it in our beatniks." That there is despair abroad, no one can doubt. It does not always go shrieking down the Great White Way, or uttering its jeremiads from the soapbox on the curb, or shouting at us from the headlines. It often lies hidden behind the "cosmetic

face," or buried deep in the bosom of a person who never misses a day on the job, or heavy in the dragging feet of the "solemn brood of care." Often it emerges only in the stillness of the night when sleep refuses her balm and the mind wrestles in vain with its puzzles or gropes down blind alleys through endless hours. But despair there is, panting and polite, gruesome and giddy, frenzied and frolicking, debonair and devilish.

The remedy for it is a brave act of faith that conceives destiny as the divine promise offered to us all, and a dialogue that will enlighten us for the realization of the promise.

Of course, dialogue alone will not be sufficient. This book is not the proclamation of a panacea. It is soon evident to anyone who has sought his own destiny or has tried intelligently to help others on their way that many factors are involved: awakening to what one is and what one is not but ought to be; repentance for all that is the negation of the divine plan for one's life; faith that is grasped by an ultimate concern and sustained by an unwavering confidence in the God of ultimate wisdom and power and love; participation in the community of the forgiven and the forgiving—the *koinonia* of the New Testament; discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ; communion with Him through prayer and the service of love.

But none of these factors becomes a reality in isolation. All of them involve dialogue. Awakening comes only when there is response to the divine initiative. Repentance becomes more than mere remorse when there is dialogue between the ego-self and the authentic self, between the spirit of man and the Holy Spirit, between the natural man and the living Word, between ego-dreams and actual events.

He who contends that "the biblical context of personal fulfillment is corporate," is on the trail of truth. But there can be no corporate context without vastly more dialogue than now occurs in the average church, for example. Corporate does not mean merely worshiping in the same building with other persons, listening to sermons, supporting budgets. One "finds himself in community" only as he maintains a dialogue with members of that community. The marvelous impact of study groups and prayer groups upon the fellowship within the church is renewed evidence of the significance of dialogue for the "body of Christ."¹

And what is the discipleship of Christ if not following Christ in question and answer as we seek to bring hearts and minds into moment-by-moment dialectic with His mind and heart? He asks from us obedience, but inquiring obedience; witness, but witness that is the answer of the deepest self to questions that men are asking.

And what is prayer? Certainly not monologue; nor orders issued to the Almighty; nor persuasion that may or may not change the divine mind. Prayer is conversation with God which involves frankness in speaking, and humility in hearing, and flexibility in substance—in a word, dialogue.

We return, therefore, to our thesis—dialogue for destiny. Dialogue alone will not bring us to "His Plains of Peace." But without depth-dialogue we shall lose our way disastrously.

In every life there are many forces at work. Upon every life many influences play, often with decisive power. Attempts to avoid them is not the answer. Nor is wearisome conflict, nor weak conformity, nor precarious coexistence. Everyone needs the world of men and things. Conflicts will come. Some conformities are inevitable. Many times there must be coexistence or no existence at all. But in it all and because of it all, for everyone, true dialogue is imperative—dialogue with people, with nature, with books, with events, with the real self, and with God. Dialogue, not filibuster, not debate, not denunciation, not dogma-parade, not decree-defiance! Dialogue!

SCARCITY OF DIALOGUE IN SOCIETY

In society, high and low, there is much chatter but too little dialogue. There is badinage, gossip, quip, witticism, anecdote, quotation often accompanied by the phenomenon known as "name-dropping," cliché, persiflage, shibboleth, casual comment. But dissent is too often silent. Discussion is under what is called polite restraint. Too few feel deeply, or are given occasion to. Absentees are sometimes given a verbal lashing, but little of importance is ever really threshed out by those present. If it be a gathering of people from the same social class or political party, there are dark hints about outsiders. If it be a cosmopolitan group, everybody treads softly, if not before the Lord at least before the imminent possibility

of affronting some human sensitivity. There are often whipping boys trotted out for the amusement of the clan. There is polite laughter over little nothings, mostly the foibles of personages on the other side of the track or the political fence. Once it was F.D.R. Tomorrow it will be another president. Everybody is smug with reference to others, however discontent he may be with himself. There is usually an eye out for the competitor and an ear open for the "lowdown" on associates. Sometimes it seems to be an assembly of the bored, who are there in the hope of escaping from their ennui but are afraid to say the honest word that will knock their boredom into a cocked hat. It is mostly token and little reality. It is a convention of the conventionalities. It is as exterior to the real self as the lipstick on immobile lips. It is a series of tiny ripples on the perfumed waters of the elegant pool where no one gets his feet wet, and most have hung their mink coats on a modern edition of the hickory limb but do not go near the water. There are formal introductions but no admission to the inner room of the heart. There is discreet use of the others' names, but no understanding of, or even a groping toward, the personal reality of which the names are a symbol. And, even when in club or parlor, first names are used easily, there is no real camaraderie of spirit.

I recall the invitation to a dinner party whose guests were men and women of distinction. I went with eagerness. "Tonight," I thought, "there will be genuine dialogue. These people have minds of their own, cultivated minds, wide-ranging minds, acute minds. Conversation will be stimulating. There will be disagreements, but also enlightenment. It will be exciting and illuminating." But it was not! The hours were spent in small talk, in uncharitable recollections involving those who were not present, in display of wit that was mostly harmless but devoid of significance for the crises through which the country was passing. I tried once or twice to turn the conversation in the direction of themes and events about which the diners had real convictions and much information. But in vain. Of course, a dinner party cannot be a class in philosophy or sociology. There is need for play in every life. But what an opportunity that was both for diversion and also for a dialogue that would have generated ideas and given wings to the mind.

From the other end of the intellectual scale comes the story of a

socialite who doted on receptions and usually succeeded in planting herself in the receiving line. There she stood, smiling, making others smile, having the time of her life. A guest who was suspicious of all such bubbling effusiveness, with malice aforethought, passed along the line in the usual fashion until he came to her. Suspecting that she never heard what anyone said to her, but had her ready-made greetings no matter who appeared, he said in polite tones: "I have just killed my mother-in-law." "Oh, how lovely," she beamed back, just as she had done with everyone who shook her hand in passing!

It would, of course, be massive hyperbole to declare that to be a typical experience in contemporary society. Its significance is that it symbolizes and emphasizes the large role which the formal, the superficial, the impersonal play in our personal relationships. Words slip "trippingly on the tongue,"² but are unrelated to the real meaning of the situation. People are greeted in the usual way, but the greeting never greets the real person. Conversation plays around life, but seldom plunges into it. Talk takes wide detours about areas which ought to be explored when intelligent people meet. The encounter of mind with mind, of conclusion with conclusion, of dream with dream, of value-scale with value-scale, seldom takes place. If anyone asks if we have met So-and-So, we would have to say in all honesty: "No, I never have met him. I have sat in the same room with him a number of times. I have talked with him. He has talked to me. But we have never really met." Of many others with whom we have almost daily contacts, we would have to confess: "I know his name. I know in a general way some of his opinions, his vocabulary, his work habits. But the man behind it all, what he most cherishes, what he would die for, I do not know."

FRIENDSHIP WITHOUT DIALOGUE

Friendship offers unique opportunities for real dialogue. Here, one moves from casual contacts to more continuous and more intimate encounters. Here, mutual confidence should make the revelation of the real self much easier. The multiplication of experiences mutually shared should banish the hesitancies which attend ordinary communication between mere acquaintances. The opportunity to view each other at closer range and in a greater variety of situations

should encourage the opening of doors to the real inwardness of one another. The practice of intellectual comradeship should develop skill in finding the comradeship of the most daring and creative dialectic.

But too often it does not happen. As Charles Stinnette, Jr., recognizes in his valuable book *Faith, Freedom and Selfhood*, "in our meetings we seldom meet." He is sure that "the gift of one's self in real meeting and the response of the other establishes the communion which makes man free for freedom."³ That gift is not easy.

In *Twice-Told Tales*, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote about a minister who to the day of his death wore a black veil. His friends gathered at his deathbed. As they stood there, they shuddered at the veil and the mystery it concealed. He noted their tremors and said: "Why do you tremble at me alone? Tremble also at each other. . . . When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved . . . then deem me a monster for the symbol beneath which I have lived and now die. . . . I look around and, lo, on every visage a Black Veil."

Most people live behind a veil. The reason is not hypocrisy. It is shyness. It is a feeling of inferiority. It is dread of losing someone we love. It is fear that the comradeship, which is the most precious thing we have found, may be shattered if it becomes too frank. It is the illusion that a relation which does not relate the inner reality to the reality of another can provide either the security or the greater self-knowledge which we all need.

Friendships often deteriorate because both parties do not give of themselves. They give gifts. They give time and energy and attention. They give opinions on subjects not taboo. They mince toward each other, then back away. They give that which costs little to give. But they do not give what it costs most to give to each other—namely their dearest convictions, their fondest dreams, their most gnawing doubts. Only in giving these do they give to each other the freedom and the power to release what lies hidden in shyness and what, in release, opens the door to a new and large life of friendship.

What is urged in this book is not the mistaken effort to have no secrets and to merge identities into an indistinguishable unity. There is an inner shrine to which God alone can have access. But friend-

ship, itself, can erect a shrine at which both may kneel in the joy of mutual devotion and by which their relationship can exert its most joy-bringing, life-begetting influence.

One of the very noblest friendships it has ever been my privilege to observe at close range proceeded at the usual pace for several years. There was real admiration, valuable discussion of important themes, helpful experience in prayer with each other, the sharing of a common faith. But, perhaps as much by the pressure of events as anything else, each was able to unveil to the other inner realities hitherto buried beneath encrustations of the years. It was not easy. There was a great sensitiveness lest they should lose each other and the comradeship which had brought such great wealth of spirit. To their great surprise and joy, instead of separating them, the disclosures gave their relationship a deeper foundation in each other's life. They became more valuable to each other. The way was opened to a comradeship that will survive the shocks of time and, they believe, will enrich eternity.

No one should wear his heart on his sleeve. But everyone should seek those to whom he can open his heart in fearless and frank dialogue. Because that will enlist his best thinking and become the commerce of his highest values and the confessional of his severest battle, it will give to friendship a beauty and a blessedness which are surely the near approach of heaven to earth.

THE HOME AND DIALOGUE

A home without genuine dialogue between husband and wife, parents and children, is a house and not a home, a hotel and not a haven, an arena and not a shrine.

When marriage is a contract and not a consecration, even when the terms of the contract are meticulously kept, it is not the fulfillment God intends. It may supply bread and butter, shelter and clothing. It may provide a luxurious center for the entertainment of guests. It may be a rung on the social ladder which members of the family are hoping to climb. It may be a telephone exchange through which various community enterprises reach their constituents. It may be a hospital for the family when sickness attacks. It may save a man from the restlessness of bachelordom or a woman from the loneliness of the unattached. It may offer the security

not found in a hotel, and a certain sense of belonging which every mortal craves. But if there is no spontaneous dialogue in which each participates daily, no soul-to-soul meeting of husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters, no communication of the deepest hauntings and hopes, dreams and doubts, questions and convictions, it will not be home for the mind and heart as it may be.

"I cannot tell my husband; he would be merciless."

"I cannot tell my wife; she would never understand."

"We never discuss such matters at our house."

"John is kindness itself, but he has no interest in this side of life."

"Mary would give her life for me, but she does not share my real life."

"I try to unveil my real self, but I realize immediately that I am talking a foreign language, and so I just shut up."

"I have sought again and again to engage him in serious consideration of the areas which mean most to my deep self, but he looks at me with eyes that tell me he is bored, and I just choke up and can go no further."

"When we were courting, we used to have real intellectual comradeship, but he soon lost himself in his business; that means nothing to me, and my music means nothing to him; so we really live in different worlds."

"We used to talk over the cares and problems of the day every night before we slept. But for years now, we are both so tired when we get home that the lights go out and we are off to slumberland before we know it. When morning comes, work calls. So we just never seem to have time or inclination to engage in conversation. The idea of divorce never enters our heads, but there has been a divorce of spirits that is impoverishing."

"I have tried again and again to lay before him the doubts that trouble me, but he always says something about my being such a good person and that is all that is necessary. He smilingly avows that doubts are the lot of humans, and should be forgotten; but I cannot forget them and I have no help in facing them."

"Our values are so different that we cannot give them more than passing mention. Once or twice I have ventured to express my sense of outrage over the disregard of something that is very precious to me, but he always jokes about it and changes the sub-

ject. So most of the time I am like a half-smothered person when we have an evening together."

"I hate to tell you this, for Susie is a splendid woman. She has been a good mother. She keeps house well. She is thrifty and in many ways very thoughtful. But you are looking at a prisoner. Not that she means to be like that. But there is so much in me that never gets out into the air of appreciation or has any real opportunity for expression in our home or associations. I know it sounds funny—a free man and yet a prisoner. But I tell you, the mind can be chained as well as the body. I do not blame her any more than myself. No doubt we are both to blame. But the blame is not important. It is deliverance that I want and I am sure she must want it too."

Confessions like these are frequently heard by ministers and counsellors. They all mean, among other things, that husband and wife have never learned the art of dialogue. They were attracted to each other. They had a comfortable, maybe exciting courtship. Friends were happy over their marriage. The family thought it a good match. Life together began auspiciously. But they did not become acquainted with one another on the deepest levels of their personality. There is usually some reticence about ideas and convictions and experiences that are intimately precious, especially if there is suspicion that the other person may see things differently or may not have had experiences that will assure generous response. So, at the beginning, when there are so many shared excitements and novel delights, it does not seem important that these other phases of life, these dearer dreams, these half-understood sanctities should be given utterance. By and by, the tug of life and its growing responsibilities and the coming of children pre-empt attention. What was secret and unshared is thrust into the background. Postponements make revelation and discussion harder to come by. The years pass. Habits of reticence are formed and strengthened. Middle age arrives. The seclusion is complete. The most real self of each lives in isolation from the other. They do not mean what they might mean to each other. They do not answer needs in each other's soul they might have answered. The answers they might have found together remain hidden from their individual quest. The persons they might have become by a continuing unrehearsed and unin-

hibited dialogue with each other never appear on the scene. Their destiny in marriage and beyond is not realized.

Parents and children often make the same mistake. One expects that, where there are intellectual or moral deficiencies in the parents. But it can happen when both parents are competent intellectually and sound morally. Some of the most tragic cases occur where father and mother are cultured and Christian.

Sometimes the parental authority is consistently asserted in behalf of the noblest ideals. But it is authoritarian and uninterpreted. When father says "go," go it must be and no questions permitted! When mother says "come," little feet must move, and there should be neither protests nor request for a reason. A man in his late twenties came to me in the grip of psychic disaster. He had lost his bearings, his faith was at zero, his spirit was bitter. It had all begun at home. His father had been a strict disciplinarian. When the man was a child, obedience to commands was expected to be immediate and complete. No discussion was tolerated. No explanations were offered. He was supposed to trust his father's wisdom implicitly. Force, not reason, was the key to the order in the household. The commands might seem reasonable enough to mature judgment, but they were not so obviously wise to the child's mind. So there was inner rebellion that could be expressed only at the risk of further punishment. The suppressed inner storm took its revenge upon the child's psyche. By the time young manhood arrived, it was a mutilated and nearly wrecked manhood. Dialogue, in which there could have been a meeting of minds and an increasing sharing of values, would have saved the son from mental disaster and the father from heartbreak.

A young woman suffered years of anxiety which sought relief in almost slavish service to the selfishness of others and in patterns of perfection which kept her at the point of exhaustion and finally left her prostrate and shattered. She had been reared in a home of moral rigor. Her ideals were, consequently, almost superhuman. Her spirit was such as saints are made of. But all along the way, there was too little dialogue of the heart. She craved it, but it was not given. The withholding was not the result of grim unconcern on the part of her parents. It was simply that their hearts were unperceiving and unresponding. They were unsentimental and could

offer the daughter no sentimental comradeship. They were correct but uncomprehending. Their arms were protective, but not enfolding. Their lips uttered truth, but seldom or never bestowed the kiss. They had the high pride of morality, but too little of its tenderness. So came disaster to the child, the last thing the parents wanted for her and the least expected. Nor did they find it easy to believe that any fault lay with them. It was not the fault of evil minds nor of fluctuating ideals. It was in large measure failure in dialogue, generating and intensifying other failures in parent-child relationship.

These are typical of the stories which could be written, with many modifications and modulations, about many such relationships. If conference could accompany and often replace commands; if aloofness could disappear before the warmth of sensitive, affectionate comradeship; if patient explanations could always meet impatient questions; if the desire for understanding could always elicit the response of interpretation; if parental minds always had faith in the child mind, and parental hearts were ever open to the child heart; if words could become bonds between souls instead of bondage to reluctant wills; if parental depths called to the depths of the child; if day-by-day dialogue were the rule and practice, home would more likely become a partner in divine destiny!

THREE

What Is True Dialogue?

Only in dialogue do we mean most to each other and receive most from each other. In Zulu language, the words "far away" mean literally, "there where someone cries out, 'O, mother I am lost.'" In that cry is a truer description of prevailing human relations than is to be found in many ponderous tomes. People are lost from each other. Not geographically, like Robinson Crusoe! For the most part we live in crowds. We are seldom out of sight or even out of touch with each other. And always there is the telephone by which at any hour of the day or night we can hear a human voice. But real selves seldom get together. We greet, but we do not meet. There is conversation, but no contact between the deeper realities. Words are spoken, but there is little encounter with cherished convictions. Questions are asked, but they often conceal rather than reveal the real yearnings. The chaotic worlds within lie hidden beneath small talk, conventional observations, clichés, polite comment. There is an antiphonal of sounds, but not a response of souls. There is the bright hum of busy voices, echoed elegance, exchange of flattery, sometimes, alas, petty gossip, occasionally deliberate affront. But little of the dialogue that brings together deep question and delivering answer, groping fancy and guiding faith, inquiring doubt and informed experience, cosy tradition and disturbing thrust of reality, conforming mediocrity and deviant adventuresomeness, orthodoxy and heresy!

Dialogue, as Martin Buber said, means that we are "turned toward" each other. Too much of the time we are scarcely aware

of the real other in our neighborhood. A recent cartoon depicts a traveler talking to his seatmate on the train: "I've been to see Schweitzer in Lambaréné," he says, "Pasternak in Moscow, Buber in Jerusalem—but I do not know a soul in New York!" How could one live in New York and not know a soul? That requires no genius, only a habit of turning away from people inwardly, or at least not turning toward them with interest.

That is the threat of life in the cities—just passing people with scarcely a glance, never regarding them with concern, never really pointing eyes and mind in their direction, never indicating by so much as a gesture of the hand or head that we would like to know them or be known by them, giving them less attention than we do a bit of paper fluttering along a windy street. We give them nothing, and they return the compliment. Denying them recognition, we not only leave them thinking less of themselves, but we are impoverishing our own self-respect and diminishing our concept of what it means to be human.

Nor is this the monopoly of the city. Out where the tall corn grows or along the village main street, there is all too little "turning toward." Rural neighbors or denizens in a sleepy village may know much about the status and stomachs and superstitions and sterilities of the neighbors, but still never really give to each other that attention which is involved in "turning toward" another human being.

Jefferson Howard wails from his grave along Spoon River,

Tangled with fates all alien to me
Deserted by hands I called my own. . . .
And I stood alone, as I started alone!
. . . I died on my feet
Facing the silence—facing the prospect
That no one would know the fight I made.

Flossie Cabanis, returned from a vain quest for a career, settling down in the old community, sighs,

In all this place of silence
There are no kindred spirits.
How I wish Duse could stand amid the pathos
Of these quiet fields,
And read these words.

Minerva Jones, the village poetess, pleads,

Will some one go to the village newspaper
And gather into a book the verses I wrote?—
I thirsted so for love,
I thirsted so for life.

Jeremy Carlisle, living in the same little community, made wiser
by the years, warns,

Passer-by, sin beyond any sin
Is the sin of blindness of souls to other souls.
And joy beyond any joy is the joy
Of having the good in you seen, and seeing the good
At the miraculous moment.¹

Real dialogue means that those engaged in it have turned toward each other long enough to be aware of each other. It makes another feel that he is not alone, that someone *is* interested in the fight he is making, that someone cares for his thirst for love and life, that someone is looking for the miraculous moment in which the good that lies below the surface may come to light.

Real dialogue means that two people have lifted their noses from the grindstone long enough to look each other in the eye. It means that they have halted in the race in which they are conscious of each other only as competitors, and have become aware of each other as human beings. It means that minds have paused in their scheming for advantage and have addressed themselves to the wonder of genuine association. It means that hearts have shaken off the spell of egocentric goals and have begun to reach out to each other for understanding and comradeship. It means the dawning of the possibility of mutual enrichment.

Obviously, real dialogue is a greater adventure than most of us have thought it to be. It is more than pleasant chatter, more than off-the-cuff exchange of observations, more than the clever display of erudition, more than the encounter of surface selves, more than ripples of words stirred by gentle breezes on the pool of twilight consciousness, more than echoes of community opinion rollicking back and forth from cliff to cliff of rigid customs.

REALITY IN UTTERANCE

Dialogue is first of all the real utterance of real opinions with a real desire to communicate with another on matters involved. That demands a penetration deep into oneself. Unamuno said, "It is by penetrating deep into one's self that we find our brothers in us."² And that is what all true dialogue is—an effort to find our brothers and to be found by them. With Unamuno there was no tolerance for "the suppression of his own thoughts and feelings for the sake of an intellectual order," and there was rigorous thinking out "with scrupulous accuracy every argument" he found in his mind. Nor should there be any less ransacking of mind by anyone who honestly desires to enter into dialogue with another. If that is not done, what appears in conversation is only the superficial echo of common opinion or the unexamined possibilities of the surface mind. One may not deliberately put on a "front," but the front is there. It is the accumulation of popular notions and private acceptances behind which the real self has hidden for so long that its existence is seldom guessed even by oneself!

A man was conversing one day in his usual manner. He was saying what one in his position was expected to say, repeating phrases which rolled easily from his tongue, answering questions with the conventional affirmations or denials. His companion for an hour was a tough realist. Fixing a critical gaze upon the other, the critic said, "O, come now. Do you mean to tell me that you believe all that?" Startled by the challenge, the only response that could be given in honesty was, "Well, come to think of it, I don't believe I do. You know, it is strange how one goes on saying things that one has said so long that the saying becomes a habit and no longer represents what one actually thinks."

Young ministers sometimes come to "a moment of truth" when they realize that the things they have said beautifully to their congregations have become just words and no more. By and by their congregations become aware of the situation. Then the dialogue between preacher and people dies. Ben Levy wrote a play about people who never had contact with their real selves and therefore did not know what they wanted or what they deeply believed. In one dramatic scene, a clergyman, Herbert Messiter, suddenly stops

in the midst of the familiar chant and hears a voice speaking and sounding "like my voice," he whispered. "It said: 'I don't believe; do you hear? I don't believe. It's all fiddlededee, fiddlededee. A rank malicious tale invented to enslave us!'"³ It was the end of his ministry. How many sermons and conversations would end, if people suddenly became aware of what they deeply believe or disbelieve! But if that were so, the end of the conversations might be the beginning of true dialogue. Nothing is worthy of the name "dialogue" that is not the expression of one real mind to another. It may be banter. It may be piousness. It is not dialogue!

THE ROLE OF COURAGE

Real dialogue demands courage. It is not easy to delve into the inwardness of one's own life and bring forth what is there. One often has to die to another's opinion of him and his own opinion of himself; die to the normal desire to be approved; die to dreams which will not be realized if others know what one cherishes most; die to one's fondness for peace. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword"⁴—that was the dedication of the greatest Dialogue of them all! The Prince of Peace knew well enough that being himself and revealing himself would involve a clash with other selves. But He also knew that agreements should *not always* have priority. Truth comes first. "I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth,"⁵ he said. That truth entered into every conversation in his life. That truth has been in dialogue with the world ever since. It cost Him a cross. It will cost no less anywhere.⁶ But out of that cross comes the conquest of error and the resurrection of the dead to new life and the remaking of souls and the creation of ever new horizons for the sons of men.

How revealing the witness of Dr. Paul Tournier, eminent Swiss physician and psychiatrist. He is what he calls "a very silent man," yet he has learned that his reticences must be overcome if he is to enter into a therapeutic relationship with those who come to him for help. How it comes about he relates:

Perhaps it is something my patient confides in me. . . . That problem that he reveals has troubled me a great deal. It still worries me. That temptation he tells me of, I know too. That lapse he confesses, I have

been guilty of similar ones. That disagreement he has had with his wife, I have had the very same one with mine. . . . *I begin to tell him of my own personal experiences.* I try to be as honest with that man as he is with me. The result is that the picture he had of me, as a personage wearing a halo . . . vanishes, allowing him a glimpse of my true person. We have both of us left convention behind, we are truly encountering each other.

He adds most helpfully:

The true dialogue is inevitably the confrontation of two personalities, differing in their past, their upbringing, their view of life, their prejudices, their idiosyncrasies and failings. . . . Either one will dominate the other, and there will no longer be a dialogue because one of the persons is eclipsed . . . or else the course of the dialogue will take it through some very dangerous waters. . . . And then there arises the risk of being judged or betrayed . . . and the temptation to run away from it by keeping back certain confidences.⁷

Unhappily, too many run away. The invigorative and unitive dialogue is broken off. People who can face every physical danger without wincing, quail before the essential demands of true dialogue. There is evasion. Only the "cosmetic self" gets into speech and action. "It is better to let sleeping dogs lie," they say. But sleeping dogs must sometimes be awakened and domesticated or banished if the real self of one is to enter into communion with the real self of the other. Otherwise, dialogue becomes a detour in which the very opinions and convictions and experiences which ought to meet in creative conflict miss each other completely.

THOUGHTFULNESS IN DIALOGUE

Active head as well as lion heart are required in true dialogue. This is no adventure for the bumbling of the thoughtless. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," and so invite summary expulsion. Nothing is more disruptive than "universal unreserve." Impetuous haste is not informed honesty. The impulse to give another "a piece of one's mind" may close another mind against one. It may leave the dialogue in pieces which, like Humpty Dumpty, can never be put together again. "I have many things to say to you but you cannot bear them now," said Jesus to His best friends. True dialogue is selective. "Is this the time to say it?" In his *Journal*, Job Scott

commented so wisely: "I was shut up as to words but had clear openings. It is sometimes wisely ordered, that precious and divine openings are treasured up. . . . How dangerous it would be . . . to lavish them out . . . without the word of command to deliver them."⁸ Like a good Quaker, he waited on orders from above. Certainly those who are not so intimate with God as to wait until He directs them should at least use all discretion before releasing into dialogue their most precious opinions and convictions.

Premature disclosures can be a block on the road to maturity. Overanxious parents sometimes inflict a real psychic wound upon their children when they begin discussion about the perennial question of sex. Preachers, in their efforts to communicate reasonable concepts of God and Bible and sin and salvation, often deluge lay minds with ideas for which they are not prepared, and so beget skepticism rather than faith. Statements which in themselves are true can become the occasion of error when the hearer is not yet capable of understanding them. One can be blinded by an excess of light as well as by the acids of falsehood. Most of us who have tried to make our conversations a means of enlightenment have, ever and anon, discovered to our great sorrow that our words, while true to our concepts were not truth for our listener. Sometimes long after, we have learned that we had introduced confusion into minds that we were passionately concerned to illumine. Sometimes in the midst of the dialogue, there appeared a look in the eyes that witnessed to mystification. From that moment on, all dialogue ceased. The conversation may have continued but there was no response. It was really only monologue, and we were the monologists. We were not frozen out; we were fogged in! There was evident no bitterness, but there was much bewilderment. We had suddenly lost touch. In straining out the gnat of error, we had asked the other person to swallow the camel of truth. He could not do it.

Effort at dialogue, therefore, should always be accompanied by prayer for guidance. The God who asks us to witness also often calls for silence. Attentiveness to Him, as well as to the person with whom we are in dialogue, will give Him a chance to restrain us from words which will confuse rather than clarify. Many of us know the strange check which often appears on the scene when

we are prayerfully in conversation. Something within seems to be saying, "Don't." Sometimes we do not heed it, and are sorry afterward. But when we do, we experience a deepening of the dialogue, even when the situation is perilous and the person is difficult. Not long ago I found myself confronted with one who was in confusion. His confusion was dangerous not only for him but for many interests that were at stake. Ideas and facts that were relevant came rolling into mind. I was praying inwardly, "Guide me here. Shall I open up this phase of the subject?" Very strongly I felt it not wise. The restraint was heeded. Not long after, I learned through another that the restraint kept the dialogue from entering an area which would have been anything but helpful. Unhappily, those checks have not always been heeded. Something was said that was true but was at the time only an irritant. Confusion followed, and the dialogue was defeated in its purpose. "When He, the spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."⁹ Hospitality to the Spirit of God is the best guarantee of continuing access to the spirit of men. Without His presence and wisdom, dialogue can easily become dynamite that destroys instead of deliverance from the bondage of half-truths and falsehoods. Probably regret for words spoken plagues us more than the plaintive wish that we had been brave enough to speak what Lynn Harold Hough calls "the heroic and reconciling word."

THE ROLE OF LOVE

A loving heart is always helpful in dialogue. Love has eyes that see where reason is often blind. Love is the great sensitizer and enables one to "feel" what is not visible to sight. One must greatly care for another when one undertakes to make one's way into another's mind and desires to unveil his true self to another. Love will note tone and gesture and look which will reveal, as words cannot, the ripeness or unripeness of the moment. Love will perceive whether the time is now or later. Love will not be afraid to disturb cosy opinions when they have ceased to be adequate, but love will never indulge in the strategy of shock just for the sake of being superior. Love is gentle as well as brave. Izaak Walton used to say, "Bait your hook for the fish as if you loved him." When fishing for a soul, love alone knows how to prepare the bait. Un-

loving dialogue is likely to degenerate into debate in which each is striving to win on points instead of winning fellowship and understanding.

This is in part what Martin Buber means when he reminds us that dialogue takes place, or should, in an I-Thou relationship. It is not easy for us, mortals, to treat persons as persons. In spite of our intellectual apprehension that they are persons, we sink into an I-It attitude toward them. The "It" is their color, their social status, their physical appearance, their mannerisms, their hobby, their dogma, their idiosyncrasy, their past, their ambition, their cleverness, their conservatism or their radicalism. To *that* we address ourselves or from that we shy away. *That* sets our tongue wagging or padlocks it with caution. *That* colors all we say and controls all that we would like to say but dare not. *That* inhibits or inspires us. *That* makes conversation a sparring match or a feast of conviviality. *That* is what we most want to know when we meet a stranger, and the last thing we forget when we go our way.

To be sure, it helps often to know just *that*; but it hinders if we let it dominate our thinking.

Often the "It" is not true. A man came to see me recently for purposes not immediately clear. He had prepared for the interview by assembling some assumed "Its." The moment he entered the door, the "Its" took control of his speech. It was so obvious that it was funny. One "It" was right—I am an advocate of peace. The rest were false. I was for him not a "Thou" but a professor at American University, a Presbyterian minister, a man with wealthy connections—and a "soft touch." I tried to disillusion him about the wealth. He soon enough discovered that the touch was not as soft as he anticipated, although I hope he found it Christian. But nothing happened that might have if he had sought an I-Thou relationship.

Even if I had been a professor at the university and a Presbyterian minister and a consort of the wealthy, contact and comradeship would have been much more a possibility if I had really been to him a "Thou" to whom an "I" sought an approach. Authors are more than authors, ministers more than ministers, composers more than composers, doctors more than doctors, Senators more than senators, industrialists more than industrialists, managers more than managers, laborers more than laborers. They are the mysterious,

awesome, intriguing, unpredictable, sensitive realities we call persons. They must be so treated if relationship with them is to be creative for them and for us who seek *them*.

Charles Wakefield Cadman composed "The Land of the Sky-blue Water." But he was more than the composer of a beautiful song. He was a "Thou" who craved to be treated so! One night at a banquet he told a friend of mine of his boredom at being known only as a song writer who sang his own songs. He said disconsolately, "If I am ever asked to sing that thing again, I am going to commit suicide!" Tragically enough, someone among the banqueters recognized him and set up the cry, "Sing the Sky-blue Water," amid loud and persistent handclapping. Happily, the suicide did not come off as threatened, but the gloom remained. Unhappy, he, who is denied the privilege of being a "Thou" to those with whom he lives and works!

"I-It" can never be the situation in creative dialogue. Every man and woman with whom one attempts converse is a "Thou," the most precious reality on earth, the object of God's creative, redemptive, providential love. There are many fascinating and beautiful things in the world.

O world, I cannot hold thee close enough!
 Thy winds, thy wide gray skies!
 Thy mists that roll and rise!
 Thy woods, this autumn day, that ache and sag
 And all but cry with color! . . .¹⁰

There is something very wrong with the man who cannot thrill to crimson sunsets and fragrant flowers and majestic mountains and flashing seas and the crystal's geometric perfection and the untaught nest-building of a swallow and the awesome might of the tiny atom and the long ascent of emergent evolution. But Christ did not die to rescue and preserve these wonders. He died that all the "Thous," which are you and I, might not perish but have everlasting life.

THE COMMERCE OF PERSONS

Whenever any one of us is in true dialogue with a person we are engaged with an incomparable and incomprehensible yet inescapable glory which transcends the world of nature, is the center of

freedom in the midst of universal law, is the habitat of values, can respond to a sense of ought, is capable of loving God and His fellows, and, in the providence of God, is meant for an eternal life of thought and affection and action!

Only as a vivid realization of that reality is present can dialogue rise to the level of its inherent possibilities as the commerce of souls. What is before one is not just a body, crowned with black hair, equipped with hazel eyes, emitting sounds grave and gay, bent over a desk eight hours a day, issuing orders to robots in a mill, dancing till midnight on occasion or going wild with glee at a football triumph, mistakenly voting the opposition ticket, writing checks that would make one faint, globetrotting half the year, taking up space in a crowded diner, competing for a place in the sun! No, there stands or sits one who is made for God, is intended by God for endless comradeship, is capable of becoming God's ally in making a better world, is affected for good or ill by what one says to him, is needing any light one may shed upon duty and opportunity, is facing tomorrow a trial for which he is not yet ready.

If every "I" were deeply aware of this "Thou," dialogue would have a dignity, an importance, a tenderness, a courage, a mental and moral alertness that would inspire one to bring to it his best. There would be diligence in discovery of the other person's possibilities and dedication to the other person's welfare.

Once I tried to initiate a dialogue between a student and a professor with whom he was having trouble. The professor was a competent teacher. The student was in need of help which the professor might be able to give. But the dialogue never began. The student felt that he was only a problem, not a person, in the eyes of the teacher. He was not aware of anything in the teacher's attitude that addressed him as a "Thou." He threw up his hands and said, "No use! He does not understand. There is no real feeling there; there is only a critical mind. He has ice water in his veins."

Robert Burgess said of Woodrow Wilson, "He always wanted to put his mind alongside yours." But that was not all the great President wanted. He wanted a heart alongside, too. "It's no compliment to me," he sighed, "to have it said that I am a great intellectual machine. I want people to love me, but I suppose they never will." Every "Thou" is both mind and heart. Consequently, every dia-

logue, if it is to be real and creative, must bring both minds and hearts together. No "It" requires to be loved. An "I-It" relationship can fare very well with only intellectual activity on the part of an "I." But an "I-Thou" relationship withers unless there is heart in it. Two mottoes might well be remembered by everyone who seeks to enter into true dialogue: "Use your head." "Have a heart."

THE ROLE OF QUESTIONS

Depth dialogue requires continuous but respectful questioning. One thus respects another's uniqueness. One is *with* him, not *against* him. Being *with* him, alas, often mistakenly means weak compromise, precarious coexistence, sometimes subtle conquest. But it may and should mean the discovery of another's precious reality, the enrichment of one's own reality by that discovery, and the mutual effort to bring both realities to their noblest fulfillment. That comes about when both welcome questioning. Eugene Meyer, newspaper executive and one of Washington's most distinguished citizens, died not long ago. At memorial services for him, Chief Justice Earl Warren paid a moving tribute. Especially he cherished the recollection that to the very last days of ebbing consciousness, Meyer still had the passion for discovery that had been the inspiration of his life. "Keep asking questions," he whispered from his deathbed. *Humble* questioning is the recognition that one does not know it all; *sincere* questioning is genuine hospitality to another's viewpoint; *brave* questioning means a willingness to be disturbed mentally, morally, spiritually; *intelligent* questioning witnesses to a conviction that only in another's answers may lie salvation from absurdity. Questioning that rises above defensiveness in its quest for truth, questioning that does not assume that deviation is a sin but knows that it is often the secret of the novelty in which lies the hope of progress—all this is an indispensable part of depth dialogue.

Unquestioning agreement is much of the time mere agreeableness. It is lazy assent that is unrelated to inner consent. It is *savoir-faire*, not saving fellowship. It may be socially proper, but intellectually improper and morally insufferable. It may play a role in the drawing room, but it plays havoc with communication.

To ask questions not only keeps one's own mind alive and makes one's speech real; it also compels the other person to examine his

opinions, scrutinize his reasons, and often make an "agonizing reappraisal" of himself and his way of life. In the process, his mental *status quo* may crumble, and by the grace of God he may set about building statelier mansions for his soul. He may explore depths in his life of which he had been totally ignorant. In those depths, he may find nuggets of mental and moral gold which will make himself and his co-conversationalist richer. Right questions are the light and life of true dialogue. No one can read Plato's Dialogues and not discover what questions can do to expose error and illuminate truth.

To be sure, questions can be very irritating. It is not difficult to understand the minister who had just given a neat account of creation, but who was immediately confronted with a question that he could not answer. His reply was not an admission of ignorance or a revision of his argument, but a retort: "Sit down; such questions would upset any system of theology." But in dialogue as in medicine, there is a salutary function for irritants! They waken lethargic organs in body and brain alike. Differences expressed in sincere questions are much more creative than when they find utterance in denunciation. They are free from a suspicion of arrogance. They put one in the role of petitioner rather than pope. They give the other the place of teacher instead of enemy. They are evidence that both retain their freedom to accept or reject, and that kind of freedom is the very matrix of living dialogue. The dialogue becomes and remains inquiry rather than inquisition, enlightenment rather than judgment, an open road rather than a dead end!

One cannot insist too strongly upon humility, but neither can one be too careful to avoid that self-abasement which corrodes confidence and makes one stumbling and inadequate in the statement of his own views and values. As much as one deplores the spirit which inspired some Augustinians to resort to epithets instead of exposition and to call their opponents "arrogant," "presumptuous," "blasphemous," one equally shrinks from the breast-beating of those who believe it is arrogant, presumptuous, blasphemous for themselves to have opinions of their own and maintain them on matters of importance in ethics, religion, politics or education. E. La B. Cherbonnier in *Hardness of Heart* has saved for us the cartoon in the *New Yorker* that portrays two convicts in a prison yard who are whispering about a third. One of them is saying to the other, "What

I can't stand about him is his guiltier-than-thou attitude."¹¹ The stupider-than-thou attitude is as hostile to true dialogue as is the keener-than-thou pose. In this respect, dialogue depends upon democracy. Each must count as one. Each must be accepted and trusted and listened to. Each must participate in the speaking and in the listening. A campus legend tells of one professor at Harvard who announced to his classes, "I know all that there is to know. If there is anything I do not know, it is not knowledge." That is insufferable anywhere except in legend. But equally insufferable is the inferiority which acts, if it does not announce, "I know little of what there is to know and, most of the time, if there is anything I seem to know, it is not knowledge."

Everybody knows something that no one else knows, and everybody "knows" so many things that are not so! Dialogue can proceed safely only as both facts are recognized.

FOUR

True Dialogue

Creative dialogue requires intelligent listening. All the difficulties of depth dialogue are intensified by the problem of communication. One often listens but does not hear. *Words* come to the auditory mechanism, but *meanings* do not arrive at the same time.

In these days of specialization, it is common knowledge that scientists in one field find it a real task to understand scientists in another. Each field develops its own dialect. An exclusive dialect prevents an inclusive dialectic. The language may be English, but the meaning is as foreign as Russian. The fact that one is a scientist gives him a passport to scientific conclaves, but when he arrives he is almost as frustrated as an American on the streets of a city where his native language is not spoken. Communication is often not a matter of men's needs or their interest in each other, but of the want of words that will convey the need or the interest. Scientists have told me that their relationship with other scientists is often frustrating to the point of despair. They can talk to each other about the weather and politics and the price of steak, but they find it difficult to communicate that which they know best and about which they care the most.

C. P. Snow, molecular scientist and novelist of no mean repute, in his recent book *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* vividly explores and expounds the tragic failure of communication between men of science and the literary intellectuals. "Comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origin," yet they have ceased to communicate. Between the two

groups, he observes, there exists a gulf so wide and so deep that they cannot even manage a "kind of frozen smile across the gulf" but only "make faces at each other."¹

That, he is sure, is "sheer loss to us all," "a practical, intellectual, and creative loss."² It is not merely that the scientist fails to read Shakespeare, and that the literary intellectual is very hazy about the second law of thermodynamics, bad as that may be. It is the absence of that dialogue between "two subjects, two disciplines, two cultures—of two galaxies as far as that goes" which has so often proved to be the stimulus of new creativity.³

Difficulties mount when scientist and theologian attempt dialogue. The University of Chicago called together a number of both to celebrate the Darwin Centennial. Among the scientists were representatives of biology, psychiatry, sociology, archeology. Theologians were not as numerous, but were there to listen and to speak. To many it was a disappointing experience. There was such a summary dismissal of issues that it was evident that many did not realize what others were firmly asserting. The issues were there; the differences were real; the conflicts were vital. But this was not realized, as it should have been, because the problem of communication between those representing science and religion was baffling. Neither could use his own language in speaking to the other and hope to be understood.

One observer wrote: "The antireligious predisposition of many scientists is such that, if communication is to occur at any effective level, theologians must seize the first responsibility to learn science as rapidly as possible, in order to talk the scientist's language." He adds, with considerable cynicism: "The theologian can learn science faster than the scientist can learn theology, because his predispositions are different; he does not have so great a burden of prejudice and ignorance to overcome."⁴

Whether scientist or theologian has the greater burden of prejudice and ignorance, both must learn to speak in terms which the other can understand, or the gap between science and religion will widen instead of lessen. That would be disaster. The world needs both, and both need each other. A failure in dialogue here will have consequences which no one can contemplate without dismay.

Nor is this matter of communication critical only in the relation

between men who are expert in science and theology and the humanities. It affects all of us who live and labor for a better world. America was once a largely Protestant country. It is currently witnessing the rise of a Catholic minority which is becoming increasingly vigorous and vocal. Urban America is now by careful estimate seventy-five per cent Catholic. There has been what Martin Marty calls an "erosion of Protestant particularity"; which means that "on the national level, religion-in-general and a religion of democracy have graduated into the status Protestants once held."⁵ It is in the midst of this religious diversity that we all live and move and have our being. Unless there can be intelligent dialogue between people who are thus diversified, there will be unintelligent debate and unwise decision. The candidacy of a Roman Catholic for the Presidency vividly revealed the lack of enlightening dialogue. Some were saying that a public official's religion has nothing to do with his fitness for office—a saying that reveals a very low concept of religion. Real religion has everything to do with a man's concept of duty, private and public, and his loyalty to those concepts. To dismiss religion in deciding about a man's fitness for office is as great folly as to dismiss his education, or his political training, or his administrative experience. On the other hand, summarily to say that a Roman Catholic should never be President, is to betray a lack of understanding of what is happening in Roman Catholic circles in America, in regard to the growing appreciation of religious freedom and the changing attitudes of Catholics about other issues in contemporary politics. Real dialogue here is difficult, but essential. One of the laments of our time is that so many Protestants do not actually know what they themselves believe, let alone have some intelligent conception of the practicing beliefs of their Catholic neighbors. History makes it difficult for either to have faith in the other's faith. But somehow such knowledge and faith must be won or the conflicts between religions and religious people will sharpen as the one-time minority grows in numbers and power. There will be denunciation instead of dialogue, irritating epithets instead of intelligent examination, oppressive majorities and seething minorities here and there instead of a continuous confrontation of mutually loyal opponents.

Nor is this the only area of both threat and promise. One man

was invited recently to join a group of persons who supposedly were concerned about liberty in America. They were intelligent men in public life—ministers, editors, publicists, writers, business men, columnists. This man attended the luncheon because he is concerned about current trends in domestic and foreign policy, and is eager to quicken his own understanding of events and to share with others a growing concern for America's future. He heard there the familiar words—freedom, justice, righteousness, fair play, political conscience, church unity, revelation, prophetic preaching, church-state relations, faith, God, Incarnation, welfare state, federalism, charity. But it soon became evident that those words meant one thing to the members of that group and quite another to himself. They were much in earnest, as they spoke, and were greatly concerned about the values they believed to be threatened by certain activities in ecclesiastical and political and religious circles. As he listened and sought a few times to speak his own convictions, he became aware that he and they lived in different worlds of discourse and meant different and mutually exclusive things by the same words! It was a frustrating experience. He found himself strongly averse to return to that group. Yet unless people, who are hidden from each other behind words, continue to seek each other's real intent and share their intent, there will be loneliness where there should be comradeship, and continuing contradiction where there is actually potential unity, and all will be deprived of the stimulus and challenge which real differences bring to active and seeking minds. The time will never come when all men will think the same things and own allegiance to the same values. But the time is always here when there is need of the dialogue between men who differ. Only in such communication can there be the purging of error and the broadening of knowledge and the saving consensus of social opinion and action.

QUEST FOR MEANINGS

True dialogue involves tireless quest for the meanings of another. When one man talks about salvation, he means a legal abatement of guilt and a transfer of his name from the roll of "the naked and the damned" to "the Lamb's Book of Life." When another uses the word, he means an act of grace whereby one is delivered from his

evil habits, his materialistic absorptions, his egocentric delusions and preoccupations, his tricky tempers, his "in-and-outness," and is set upon the road of love and service.

In a recent forum on race relations, one prominent churchman hotly declared, "Jesus Christ is the Saviour of my soul. He has nothing to do with my attitude toward the Negro." But there are increasing numbers of earnest people who do believe that the saviourhood of Jesus Christ has *everything* to do with our treatment of our colored brethren. "Saviour" means one thing to one man, quite another thing to another man. If there is to be a real dialogue on salvation, it will be necessary for each man to understand just what the other means when he calls Jesus "Saviour." Otherwise, there will be subtle contradiction rather than creative communion. Each will go away in complete misunderstanding of what the other said. Each may believe that he is in agreement with the other, and will miss the challenge or the contribution which a true dialogue brings. Or each will assume a fundamental difference which is nonexistent. Minds have not really met; they have only paused for a moment in each other's neighborhood.

Not long ago, it was my privilege to share in a discussion of the Incarnation and the role of the historic Jesus and His relation to the Eternal Christ. Each one present spoke at length about his convictions. At first, there appeared to be irreconcilable differences and some rather irritating implications reaching out to other areas of thought and life. But the participants began to inquire into meanings behind the language that each had employed. As they did, they found themselves coming closer and closer together in a warming and thrilling experience of unity in devotion to Jesus Christ. To be sure, differences remained, differences of emphasis, of interpretation, of insight. But because they had sought meanings, not immediately evident in words, they had a creative meeting of minds and hearts. They had discovered each other. The differences that remained became a stimulus to further thought and exploration. New pilgrimages were begun. A new unity in difference was realized. The differences were stimulating; the unity was heartwarming.

Until one is communicating his own real meaning and is ascertaining the real meaning of the other person, there is no real dialogue. There is only an antiphonal of sounds. They are only speak-

ing *at* each other, not *to* each other. Sometimes it is actually as ludicrous as the attempt at conversation between two nearly deaf people, both of whom hear only enough of what the other is saying to give irrelevant replies. There is merely an exchange of misconceptions. A minister was heatedly arguing for an item of faith which he believed another minister was denying. The argument was almost fierce, and the longer it continued the lustier it became. Each was surprised and grieved that the other could contend as he did for what was supposedly untenable. Finally it dawned upon one that there was complete misunderstanding of what the other was saying. He smiled rather embarrassedly, "Well, I guess we are not talking about the same thing." They were not! They really shared the same faith. But they did not begin with a perception of each other's intent. So instead of washing each other's mind with the clear waters of perception, they were only splashing each other with the mud of their mutual confusions!

RESPECT FOR UNIQUENESS

Good listening requires respect for the other person's uniqueness. He will not be heard if he is considered only as a member of a class or sect or party. He may be that, but he is more.

Is he a labor unionist? That will tell you some things about him. It will help you to understand his terminology and his general viewpoint. But there is much about him that is not covered by his labor relations and probably is little affected by those relations. You will never hear the real man if you permit everything he says to be strained through your concept of what a union man must think. Once it was my responsibility to effect a settlement in a labor dispute that had been going on for six months. The first meeting was the scene of such bitter recriminations that any agreement seemed impossible. I adjourned the session with a plea that they come together that night, not as unionists and managers but as men. They did just that. The session was as friendly as the earlier one was hostile. Within twenty-four hours, a complete settlement was worked out. As the papers were being signed, one of the managers pointed out one of the union representatives and said: "You know, I used to think that fellow was a devil. I hated him. But today I have come to like him." When the employer began to respect the

uniqueness of the employee and to deal with him in the light of what he individually was, there was dialogue and discovery and decision shared by both.

One of the difficulties in the dialogue between Protestant and Catholic in America is that each comes to the other with a stereotype in mind. He does not see the real person before him, but all the disliked features that ever existed in any representative of the other faith. While in the chaplaincy in the First World War, I stopped in a little, rural Catholic church in France and stood there with bowed head before the symbols of my Christ, grateful for the quiet and for the opportunity to worship in a sanctuary. Another chaplain, a Roman Catholic, came in while I was there and could not restrain his surprise that a Protestant should manifest reverence in a Catholic shrine. Some time later, two Catholic nuns visited my church in the heart of a great city. They were deeply moved as they stood before the altar and, to my surprise, they said to each other, "We would like to pray here, wouldn't we?" Each of us had learned a lesson in, and respect for, the uniqueness of each other. Later I had the gift of a book from the nuns and in it was a note which read, "Your church has an atmosphere of dedication to worship. Meeting you at last was a distinct pleasure. We would not have missed the experience. May your life which is obviously motivated by the 'goad of love' be increasingly enriched in the common bond of faith. Sincerely in Christ."

Dialogues would be more frequent and more fertile if those of us who come from different backgrounds and have arrived at different conclusions would only respect the uniqueness of each other and carry on our conversations in the light of that uniqueness. Common bonds would be discovered and common discoveries would be made and common causes thereby enhanced. Differences would still exist, but they would challenge and purify rather than irritate and poison our relationships in a free country.

DOES HE MEAN JUST THAT?

In every dialogue, I must seek the meaning which the other person is trying to convey through the words he employs. But I must go further. I must ask, "Does he really mean that?" That is not to imply that he is deceiving himself as to what he means or that he

is trying to deceive me. It is merely a recognition that he may be deceived about himself at that point. There is always the possibility that his meaning, as presented, does not really represent what his deeper self really means. John D. Rockefeller IV, who has lived in Japan for years, sought to understand the Japanese students whose riots compelled the Japanese government to withdraw its invitation to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Rockefeller wrote: "Sometimes when in conversation with a Japanese student friend, I feel as if I am talking to a stereo set, with a modern searching soul as one speaker and the trained traditional soul as the other. At such times I wonder which one is speaking to me and marvel how they must compete with each other for a chance to speak."⁶

That marvel is often present in dialogue. The soul that is speaking at any time may be a creation of some psychic wound, a victim of some horrible experience, a fugitive from some fear or antipathy. The meaning for which it contends may be only a mask over the real self. To enter into dialogue with that is to debate with a ghost, as unprofitable an enterprise as can engage one's mind.

A man who is offering a faith in the deity of Jesus, may actually not mean that at all. He may only be expressing his aversion to that humanism which downgrades Jesus to the level of a myth or of a carpenter who has been lionized by fanatic followers. If you probe a bit, ask him if he believes that Jesus is God, or that Jesus will never be surpassed in the future, he will say that he does not mean just that, but that he cannot stand "these smart alecks who would laugh Jesus off the map."

Another man may ridicule the idea of praying to Jesus, or decry the assumption that Jesus never sinned, or refuse to crown Him Lord of all! But if you patiently explore his mind and ask him if he believes that Jesus was only a man just like the rest of us, or that Jesus' death was merely that of a martyr, or that the church was founded upon a huge delusion, he will reply vigorously that that is not his meaning, but that he cannot brook the deification of Jesus that robs Him of His humanity and puts a great gulf between Jesus and us!

You may be talking about segregation; your listener may defend it stoutly. You, being an integrationist, begin to marshal all the evidence in behalf of racial brotherhood. You are inclined to be

angry with anybody who would deny any man his rights as a human being just because of the color of his skin. But you restrain your indignation and begin to ask him questions. "What difference does complexion make? Isn't the important thing character? Aren't there devils within all races? Would you not prefer to have your children attend school with children of another race, whose parents have reared them in courtesy and cleanliness and reverence, rather than with children of your own race who know only the profanity and vulgarity and boorishness which they have learned in their Caucasian homes?

I put similar questions to a college student who was horrified because, at a Retreat, she was asked to live in the same dormitory with some choice colored students, and because she was being taught to pray in the group to which a few colored students had been assigned. She herself was a brunette. I asked her how she would like it if the girls in her school barred from the dining hall and the library and from social activities all who were not blondes. She admitted that would be irrational and immoral. I asked her if the Negro girls were any more responsible for the color of their skins than she was for the color of her hair. Then I suggested that, in either case, rejection on the ground of color was not Christian, and that association should be determined by character and intelligence. I can hear her say yet, "Why, Dr. Day, I never thought of that." Her original protest did not mean that she underrated character and intelligence. It meant that she was very much concerned with both, but that she had grown up amid parental and social assumptions that to be black meant to be deprived of both character and intelligence, and she wanted to be with girls who had not been warped by such deprivation. When I got behind her words and her obvious meaning and discovered what her deepest soul meant, it was not difficult to enter into a dialogue that resulted in a change of attitude and behavior.

Or you may be a segregationist, ready to meet all comers with your convictions. You are confronted with a neighbor who is certain that the present situation in America is un-American and unchristian. He says so in unmistakable and provocative language. Then you begin to probe his meaning. Does he mean that everybody is equal to everybody else? Or that one wants to live beside

anyone whose daily and nocturnal habits are unendurably offensive? Or that all social distinctions are to be done away? Or that marriages are to be encouraged between any two who happen to feel a romantic attachment for each other? Or that being human and American is all the recommendation that anyone needs for an entrance into any club or parlor or church?

You will find that none of these meanings is his real meaning. What concerns him is that every human being should be recognized as the creation of God and the object of God's redemptive love; that everyone should be given every opportunity for the development of all his God-given capacities; that state and church and school and industry and the professions should be committed to provide such opportunities without discrimination; that every American should recognize the fundamental American principle that "governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed," and by the same token be ready to grant to every citizen the right to express his consent or dissent at the polls; that neither by threat nor pressure nor psychological intimidation should any child be denied his heritage under God!

On the basis of such meanings, recognized by both parties, it will be possible to enter into such continuing dialogue as will correct the misunderstandings and subdue the excesses of integrationist and segregationist and make race relationships in America more Christian.

One man's words may damn the welfare state; another's may hail it as the solution of most current economic and political ills. Both seem to mean what they say. In this area, feelings are strong and language does not fail to communicate those feelings. What may be started as a dialogue soon reaches the point of explosive denunciation. Each regards the other as deluded and hopeless. The advocate of the welfare state is rated as Utopian; the opponent, as antediluvian.

But suppose they both set out to find what the real meaning of the other person is. The advocate is asked some questions: "Do you want to encourage irresponsibility; to give people the feeling that Uncle Sam will take care of them, regardless of their shiftlessness or thriftlessness; to discourage hard work and foresight and self-denial; to burden the state with the problems of each individual; to

have government messing around in the private life of every citizen, as it must if it is to assume universal guardianship; to increase taxes until individual initiative is smothered by tax burdens and the state sinks under the load it is attempting to carry?"

And suppose the opponent is also asked some questions: "Do you assume that hard work and personal thrift will secure for every individual protection against the threat of unemployment, sickness, and old age; that, in this day of automation, the individual can outwit the researchers and find jobs as rapidly as invention eliminates them; that voluntary insurance plans can provide the medicines and hospitalizations that multitudes need for health and efficiency; that government concern with welfare actually means creeping socialism; that Lincoln was in error when he said that government exists to do for people what they cannot do for themselves? Or don't you care if millions are underfed, ill-housed, in constant fear of unemployment and sickness, deprived of cultural opportunity? Or do you dismiss all this, as Darwin dismissed the asperities and cruelties of the struggle for existence, as too bad but the price of the precious privileges of the superior few and the progress of all?"

Probing like these will evoke disclaimers from both advocate and opponent of the welfare state. Both will affirm that they do not mean just that or even any of it. The resulting attempt to interpret what they do mean will open the way to genuine dialogue in which there will come better understanding, some agreements, more careful examination of their own positions, mental invigoration, the exile of clichés and bromides which have been their reliance and their confusion, a more intelligent citizenship and, let us hope, a more Christian individual and social ethic!

It is amazing to discover what alertness to real meanings does to a dialogue. One finds himself in conversation with a man who hates the church, has no use for God, wants to die, and is terribly serious about it all; or with a woman who is avowedly agnostic, pleasure-mad, frivolous, cynical, hostile; or with a student who is anarchistic, sexually free-wheeling, a smart aleck, a devil-may-care sort.

If one attempts dialogue with them on the basis of their apparent meanings, he will find himself baffled and maybe disgusted. But if he has a concern that impels him to seek for the actual meanings

behind their talk, he will often find much that he can enter into intelligent discussion with and from which illuminating answers may be evoked.

The real situation may be that the man is unhappily married to a woman whose devotion to the church has made her insensitive to the demands of the home, careless of her obligations to her husband, infatuated with the attention given her by those who are themselves substituting "church work" for the homely duties of wifehood and motherhood. The man feels deserted, as he gets up to make his own breakfast while the wife sleeps off the weariness acquired at the annual bazaar; or when he comes home to a house empty because the wife is attending one of her many church activities; or as he toils day after day to provide for her aristocratic tastes, but seldom hears a word of appreciation for his labors although "wifey" is always heaping praise upon the brilliant speakers she hears at church gatherings. He does not really mean that he hates God, but that he does hate what God apparently has done to his home and his relationship with his wife. If a dialogue with some Christian can bring him some appreciation of his plight, his sense of neglect because of her misinterpretation of what God wants of her, his loneliness, and if it will make clear God's concern that he shall have a home and a wife who really gives him the place he should have in her heart and her labors, it will be a welcome experience. It may bring both him and his wife into a new relationship with each other and with the God whom his wife affects to love and serve, and whom he thinks he despises but actually does not! Such a dialogue will be possible, however, only if someone comes along who will seek for what the husband means and not be deceived by what he says or by what he honestly thinks he means.

The woman may be the child of parents whose religion seems to her to be irrational and therefore unacceptable. In her reaction from religion she has fled to the world of sensation. Not finding there what can satisfy her spirit, she has become cynical. Her cynicism in turn has alienated many who would like to be friendly and, so, she has turned against humanity generally. She does not in her deep self mean that she is against God or His world or His creatures. She is only against what they all seem to her to be. Again, if someone could enter into deep dialogue with her, someone who is wise

enough and patient enough to seek out the reasons for her hostility and reveal to her the deep-lying needs which only God and godly people can answer, it would be for her the beginning of a new life.

The student is probably not a Casanova or a don't-care. He has been denied love, and, unable to live on what the world has given him, has sought something more, in defiance of custom and law and the ordinary prudential maxims of society. Here again is a call for dialogue beyond the usual give-and-take of discussion. Someone is needed who will discount his appraisal of himself and his world, and who will unfold to him the reason for his rebellions and his libertinisms and his shockers, someone who will help him to see that his true life will begin only when he opens himself to the love of God and the needs of his fellow men.

Of course, it must not be inferred that there are no men or women who actually mean evil. There was Hitler and Ana Pauker and Eichmann and the hideous blond of Buchenwald and a multitude of lesser incarnations of the demonic. Depravity is a real, historical phenomenon. For that reason, it is important that every dialogue should penetrate behind phrases and apparent meanings and get at the real meaning of any person. Only so can we help them to see themselves as they are—a shock that may recall them to their senses and disillusion them as to the impression they have of themselves. But if that is not possible—and often it is not—at least such dialogue will deliver us from their snare. One wonders if *many early, deep* dialogues might not have altered the career of Adolf Hitler, or at least precluded his adoption as Messiah by the German masses. One is certain that many lesser charlatans could have been halted, if only a few people of importance had refused to take words at their face value, and to accept high meanings offered as patriotism as proof of intention, and had, by skillful question and brave appraisal, exposed such persons to themselves.

Destiny-seeking dialogue requires not only careful inquiry into words but also probing into meanings, until each party to the dialogue finds himself in commerce with the real self of the other.

It also requires empathy, the ability to feel the uncertainties beneath the certainties of another, the doubts lurking within the faith however vigorously affirmed, the gropings that are dimly discerned and fumblingly expressed, the oft agony that is voiceless but that is

vicious in its impact upon the selfhood. Someone calls it the "hearing of the heart."

DEFENSIVENESS VS. HOSPITALITY

By all means, one must beware of defensiveness. If one is oversensitive about his own position and more concerned to defend it than he is to hear the truth, one is very likely to be an imprisoned mind that closes whenever an opposing fact or opinion appears on the scene. Such a mind does not hear anything it does not want to hear. In that case, there can be no real dialogue, any more than there can be between persons who are totally deaf. The real questions are not heard and the answers given are irrelevant. There is no meeting of minds. A man once said about his wife: "She is always on the defensive. She is never open to evidence. Her insecurity twists my most innocent remarks into assaults upon her position. We cannot discuss anything reasonably." A group of persons of more than average intelligence and concern, representing different views on religious and social matters, met for the purpose of dialogue. It was hoped that they might explore their differences, understand each other better and perhaps modify opinions hitherto held and reach a common ground on which they might stand amid the swirl of events. But, alas, some were so much on the defensive that anyone who quietly ventured an opposing thesis was unable even to finish a sentence because of interruptions. Of course, there could be no real dialogue in such circumstances.

What is needed is hospitality to criticism. The most stimulating dialogues in which I ever participated occurred twice a month in Pittsburgh. There gathered on Tuesday evenings some twenty ministers and laymen who had disciplined minds, strong convictions, and ready utterance. This was never an occasion for "the sacrament of rose water." It was a battleground of ideas where positions were mercilessly confronted with all the heavy artillery available and defended with all the weapons of fact and logic in the armory. No one was condemned for his faith nor banished for his doubts. But everyone was honor bound to state his convictions and to accept in good spirit all criticisms directed against them. Those who were used to flattery and to conformity soon vanished from the scene after the first shock of frank speech and fearless judgment.

But those who stayed had a continuing experience of dialogue that enriched all their after years.

The Quiz Club was what it was because its members were hospitable to intelligent but pitiless analysis of opinions and of facts. It must never be forgotten that it is just at the point where we cannot take each other for granted that the promise of a better life for us all lies. Differences should not merely be tolerated but explored, understood, reconciled, rejected or adopted, or become the catalytic of a new experience for the individual or society. The real meaning of freedom is not the peaceful coexistence of contradictions, but the challenging contact of ideas, out of which may come not merely conflict but creation.

If I love the one with whom I am in dialogue, there will be no attempt to force my opinion upon him. A dogmatist may try that. A dictator will insist upon it. With both there may be threats or brainwashing, the grim choice of assent or death. But the Christian knows that forced assent is a violation of personality and a blasphemy against truth. The Christian's God leaves men free to assent or dissent, to obey or disobey. Granting us freedom, we in gratitude give Him our love and our life. So in our relationship with our fellows, by the very act of conferring freedom upon them, we evoke a response from them. In the dialogue with Socrates, Thrasymachus asks, "Must I take the doctrine and thrust it into your mind?" And Socrates replied, "Heaven forbid you should do that!"⁷ He might have said, "You cannot do that!" Minds can be terrorized. They can be paralyzed. But they cannot be stuffed, like turkeys for Thanksgiving celebrations. Minds can be convinced. They can be enlightened. But conviction and enlightenment are most likely to occur where there is the love that confers freedom.

Help me the slow of heart to move
By one clear winning word of love.⁸

No other strategy is so effective! It opens the way for whatever truth I may seek to communicate to the other mind—and, not least significant, it keeps my own mind open to whatever truth he may have which has eluded me!

By now, is it not evident that real dialogue is not for learned circles only but for all who seek their God-offered destiny? It is

not the diversion of those who have plenty of leisure, but is the daily task of those who seek a better life for themselves and for their world. It is not an option of minor importance but an indispensable major in the curriculum of life.

By it, our real convictions will come into creative relationship with the convictions of others. By it, we may be delivered from the concepts which imprison our minds. By it, we can help effectively to break the fetters that chain other minds. By it, our best will get into redemptive circulation in society. By it, will we, ourselves, be stimulated to the searching self-criticism and the critical research which will help to make us what we ought to be.

Dialogue represents both duty and opportunity and therefore is one great condition of fulfilled destiny.

FIVE

The Dialogue with the Self—I

There are many dialogues that mold our search for our destiny. The dialogue with the self is involved in them all. We began with the dialogue with others because that is the most natural reference when we are thinking of dialogue at all. But the dialogue with the self must have early consideration. The bitter reality is that the self seldom gets into our dialogues.

Pathetically few of us have ever discovered our actual self. Many of us have no adequate dialogue with the self of which we are aware. This obvious self is a self that is sometimes sad, sometimes gay, often weary and always worried, frequently perplexed and occasionally pained. In each of these phases of our selfhood, dialogue is important. But nowhere is it so crucial as in those manifestations in which we know ourselves as lonely and guilty.

THE LONELY SELF

The obvious self is a lonely self. There never has been a person who is not caught up in loneliness. One may be very popular, and yet very lonely; a socialite, and yet as isolated as an exile; have little time to be by himself, yet actually, in his deepest feelings, his hopes, his dreams, his dreads, be by himself all the time! One may spend his days and nights amid the endless chatter of other humans, and yet never hear a word that touches his deepest need. One may be a speaker of renown, with a crowded calendar of speaking engagements, yet never in any of them can he give utterance to that within which craves to unburden itself to some understanding heart.

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.¹

It is not only poets who cannot always find expression for their thoughts. Nor is it that some things, going on in brain and heart, seem beyond the understanding of one's fellows. We do not understand them ourselves! They are often only a vague restlessness; ideas that, like fireflies in the darkness, flash and disappear ere we can lay hold upon them; aversions that keep us from joining in the cheer for some contemporary; inexplicable dullness that leaves us unmoved in situations where we think we ought to be inspired but are not; impulses that come from we know not where, that make us "hate the good in us and want to crush it," as a distraught woman finally confessed in a recent letter; a certain lostness that cries inwardly for a comradeship that we have never found; a mystery that envelops us and sometimes frightens us, but is as hard to define and declare as it is to resolve.

Some people try to forget this loneliness. Others seek escape in high-pressure activity, in excitement, in drugs, in multiplication of associations, in esoteric rituals, in highbrow or lowbrow mysticism. Too seldom do they enter into dialogue with it, asking what it means, what facets of life are missing, what is wrong with their friendships, what it is trying to tell them about their way of life, what hidden aspect of themselves is thus clamoring for recognition. If instead of running away from this lonely selfhood, they turned toward it; if instead of doping it into temporary insensibility, they kept it awake and listened to it humbly, some great discoveries might transform their lives.

Some begin the dialogue but never see it through to the "moment of reality." Thomas Wolfe has written more graphically about this loneliness than anyone else of our time. Dying before his enchanting promise was realized, he nevertheless left behind not only great fiction about the people of his fertile imagination but a poignant story of his own lonely days and nights. In the light of his own experience, he avows his belief that "loneliness is the central and inevitable fact of human existence." What it does to a man, he tells vividly:

There are times when . . . the most casual words, the most trivial incidents can in an instant strip me of my armor, palsy my hand, constrict my heart with frozen horror. . . . Sometimes it is nothing but a shadow passing over the sun; sometimes nothing but the torrid milky light of August . . . evoking the intolerable misery of countless drab and nameless lives. . . . Again it may be just a phrase, a look, a gesture. It may be the cold disdainful inclination of the head with which a precious, kept, exquisite princeling of Park Avenue acknowledges an introduction, as if to say, "you are nothing." Or it may be a sneering reference and dismissal by a critic in a high class weekly magazine. . . . It may be so vague as to be a kind of hideous weather of the soul, subtly compounded of all the hunger, fury and impossible desire my life has never known. . . . Beneath the evocations (of all this) all the joy and singing of the day goes out like an extinguished candle, hope seems lost to me forever, and every truth I have ever found and known seems false. . . . The essence of human tragedy is in loneliness.²

With this loneliness, he holds dialogue. In the dialogue, he learns much; "joy gains its glory out of sorrow, bitter sorrow, and man's loneliness." He finds in the Old Testament "the most final and profound literature of human loneliness that the world has known." He turns to the New Testament and the story of Christ whose central purpose is "to destroy the life of loneliness and to establish here on earth the life of love"; "It tells men that they shall not live and die in loneliness, that their sorrow will not go unassuaged, their prayers unheard, their hunger and thirst unfed, their love unrequited; but that through love, they shall destroy the walls of loneliness forever." He is fascinated by the prospect. He returns to it again and again.

But there he falters. "I know that though the way and meaning of Christ's life is a far, far better way and meaning than my own, yet I can never make it mine, and I think that this is true of all the other lonely men that I have seen or known about. . . . I have found the constant, everlasting weather of man's life to be, not love, but loneliness."

Besides, he is afraid of love; "from it we get pain and darkness; and the mutilations of the soul, the maddening of the brain, may be in it." And so he concludes that "at the end, forever at the end for us—the houseless, homeless, doorless, driven wanderers of life, the

lonely men—there waits forever the dark visage of our comrade, Loneliness.”²

If only he had not ended the dialogue there!

He might have learned that loneliness is a divine messenger calling us to love, as sex is the divine summons to parenthood. In one as in the other, there are risks, risks of pain, of heartache, of disappointment, of weariness, risks that would frighten us away, unless there was set within a hunger that carries us through the risk to the realization. Loneliness is the unrest that will not let us be content with our solitude. It is God’s call to love, to get out of ourselves into fellowship, out of our egocentric absorptions into devotion to others, out of the deadly circle of “I, me, and mine,” into the creative attachment to, “we, us, and our.” Many a person has fervently wished that fleshly desire might leave him forever. “Why must I be plagued with this battle?” cried a woman weary of the fight. And many a soul haunted by loneliness has fervently wished that he might be rid of it once and for all. Yet in both cases ridance would be misfortune. There would be less parenthood on the one hand and, on the other, less experience of both the pangs and the joys of comradeship, if the physical hunger or the spiritual desolation were not there to drive one out and on in quest, until some answer be found.

Thomas Wolfe attained only half the truth. Love is the answer to loneliness. But loneliness is the hunger that drives us to love. If we are lonely, it is in part because we are not loving widely enough, deeply enough, persistently enough. The loneliness is not merely a craving to be loved; it is a craving to love. Without that craving, earth would be a more desolate and destructive place than it now is.

Loneliness is also God’s invitation to enter into fellowship with Him. It is a constant reminder that a living, loyal relation to Him is not merely a duty the creature owes to the Creator, but a need deeper than is the need we feel for human fellowship. “Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.” That biblical dictum might well be accompanied by another, “Without loneliness, no man shall seek the Lord.” If things and people could content us, we should never bother to look God up. It is only because, after things have been heaped upon us in abundance and people have poured their offerings of truth and love into our hearts in generous measure, we

are still lonely that we set out to find God. If there is a deep loneliness stalking us day and night, as it did Thomas Wolfe, it is not that we are doomed, as he thought, to "the dark visage of our comrade, Loneliness," but that we are destined to seek for the bright visage of the Comrade who is the redemption from loneliness!

Pity it is if our dialogue with loneliness does not continue until we find ourselves face to face with God in the inner sanctum which He has created to be a shrine and an altar, where "lost in wonder, love, and praise"³ we suffer no longer the pangs of solitude but experience the fulfillment of a comradeship that knows all and loves us just the same!

The obvious self is plagued with guilt. No one but Jesus could ever ask, "Which of you convicts me of sin?"⁴ The difference between mortals is not that which divides the innocent from the guilty, but that which divides those who carry on a healthy dialogue with guilt from those who do not.

There are those whose dialogue is flippant: "So I did wrong? You don't tell me?" Others are serious enough, but it is the seriousness that is preparing a defense: "Well, maybe, but I doubt it. Right and wrong are relative matters. What is wrong at one time and in one situation, is right at others. This is one of the others." Still other persons admit the wrong and their responsibility for it, but their dialogue is morbid to the point of utter despair. The more they discuss their plight, the more hopeless they become. They begin by recognizing guilt; they end by wrecking their sanity. They chastise themselves so bitterly that they choke all hope of becoming better. They give themselves to the lash and then give their future to a devil that croaks daily in their ears, like Poe's Raven, "Nevermore, nevermore."

Our generation seems to abound in each of these misleading and demoralizing dialogues. It is a strange contradiction of flippancy and fury, of evasion and indictment, of breastbeating and browclearing, of judgment seats and medal awards, of narcotized consciences and endless investigating committees, of moral callousness and ethical sensitivity. It is little wonder that true dialogue with the guilty self is rare.

Guilt should not be answered with a shrug of the shoulder. Neither should it be answered with a thumbs-down decree. Its ap-

pearance should be the occasion of the most critical, objective, analytical thought of which we are capable. Was I wrong? Why? What can I do about it? What will God do about it and with me?

To admit that "I" was wrong is very difficult for the average mortal. Yet there can be no relief otherwise. Confession, instead of fastening guilt upon oneself, is the first step toward ridding oneself of it. It is often a painful catharsis, but always a salutary one.

To ask sincerely why "I" was wrong requires great humility, relentless honesty, faithful recollection of events, severe curbing of tendencies to put upon one's actions a better interpretation than they deserve, a kind of scientific integrity and moral transparency such as too seldom attends self-scrutiny. Every man who has ever truly repented knows how seldom! Excuses are always at hand, and most plausible. Other people are such likely scapegoats for one's misbehaviors. Often self-justification has become such a habit that only a rude awakening by events themselves shakes one out of his complacency and compels him to ask "why?" with a realism that makes him aware, for the first time, of the judgment that he should long ago have pronounced upon himself. Only recently was such an awakening encountered by a man who in all sincerity was basking in self-approval. He was not a hypocrite. His devotion to Christ was genuine. His concern for the people for whom Christ died was deep, and often was given costly expression. Then came events that compelled a profound reappraisal of his manner of life. At first, the shock floored him. Then came a searching review of what had been. Incredulously, he looked at himself as he passed in review on the screen of memory. Could that be he? No, it could not be! But it was! It was not what he intended, but it was what he had been and done. For the first time in his history he answered "*why*" with fidelity because he first of all realized "*what*."

Next comes the inevitable, "What can I do about it?" Guilt must study the consequences in other lives of what one's own life has been. Here is often heartbreak! One can receive almost with satisfaction the penalties attached to his error or sin. They seem like atonement. But the saddest element in guilt is in the consciousness of what one has done to others. One cries out, "Do with me what Thou wilt but spare, oh, spare, family, friends, neighbors, in-

nocent victims, society!" That cry becomes another advance in the dialogue with guilt if it passes into vigorous effort to make amends, to offer restitution, to sacrifice for those who have been made to suffer. I have seen men mortgage their homes and risk their business future in order to remedy the hurts inflicted upon others by their wrongs. I have known others to actually surrender the results of a lifetime of sacrifice that, thereby, interests they had jeopardized might be recouped and the work of Christ might go on to greater success. In every one of these cases there was heartbreak. But there was also emancipation from guilt and a strange, unique, mysterious joy in their souls, the like of which they had never before known!

"What will God do about it?" Wrong answers here will be devastating. And wrong answers are more frequent than right ones. On the one hand is the sentimental, easygoing talk of forgiveness that does not reckon with the holiness of God and His horror of the hurts we inflict upon ourselves and others. The forgiveness implied is not forgiveness at all; it is only an "Oh, forget it" on the part of a God to whom none of it has made any real difference. It has none of the suffering love and merciful patience with which God takes our sins upon Himself and forgives because His love is greater than our assault upon it. That kind of forgiveness really goes to the heart of the matter and also to the heart of the offender. The other kind has no moral quality and offers no moral release. It is a mere wave of the hand when what is needed is a work of the heart, a heart that bleeds and by bleeding blesses!

Quite as demoralizing is the answer still often heard. The answer is a harsh, rigid formula, which determines for all guilt a rough time even after repentance. True, there is promised forgiveness of a sort, the kind of forgiveness which some pious people extend when they say, "Of course I will forgive, but I cannot forget," and thereafter the offender is held at arm's length, often reminded of his offense, never again taken into the fellowship once enjoyed, kept across the fence of doubt and mistrust. To some sinners, God is just as incapable as some "good" people of the forgiveness that forgets, and restores to fellowship, and holds close in the embrace of rejoicing and renewing love, and loves even more because for a while there was alienation and a heartbreaking loss of communion. But this

is the forgiveness guilt must have if its paralyzing power is to be broken and its victim set free for growth in righteousness and moral and spiritual beauty and for redemptive service to others.

A true dialogue, carried on in the light of Christ, will not treat lightly the sin, but it will treat with greater insight the love of God revealed on the Cross and sealed by the Resurrection. It will unveil the wonder of a divine holiness that opens its arms to the penitent, takes them into its cleansing, regenerating, emancipating life, holds them fast in a communion that knows no reproaches, no sad reminders of the unhappy past. It will reveal the unblemished, unlimited experience of a love that is always *now*, and *not a diluted remainder of what once was!*

A man in one of our churches had wandered from the path ere he knew it. His heart was still loyal, but his feet had strayed. His experience was particularly tragic because it was wholly unintentional. Illusion born of a great happiness had led him to decisions which seemed at the time to be life-making. But came the hour of awakening and such anguish as words cannot convey. The result was real tragedy. Harsh and bitter condemnation descended. There were losses that seemed final. Friends in whom he had trusted failed to understand. Doors were shut against him. Those who themselves had received mercy from him, now had no mercy to offer him. Those who preached about the Cross had none of its redemption to share with him. If God were like them, there could be only bitterness and blackness and isolation and repudiation awaiting him. But because he loved God and wanted God even more than he wanted his own peace, he clung to the skirts of the Almighty, and from the dust kept up his dialogue.

Then it happened! In a vision more real than the rising of the sun after a stormy night or the sudden return of a long-absent beloved, he saw Christ. He felt himself taken into loving arms. He knew himself enveloped in all the forgiving love which the Cross has symbolized to all the centuries since Calvary. His sin and his suffering were absorbed and annihilated. He knew he was loved and forgiven. The Man who suffered for him and because of him and with him would be his comrade forever. He began to sing:

Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?²⁵

Soon he was on his knees in awe and rapture and renewed life and hope. That vision has never left him. He lives by it every day in a joy that has sought him through pain and with a confidence that nothing in this world or in the world to come can ever separate him from the love that touched his bitterest hour and transformed the night of pain into the birth-hour of a new life in Christ.

That was the end of a true dialogue with guilt. It may be the end for all who will have it so if they will conduct it in the light of Christ.

THE ACTUAL SELF

Beyond the obviousness of the lonely, guilty self is the actual self. Our dialogue is faulty because few of us have ever discovered our actual self.

Stendhal was a soldier, administrator, grocery clerk, conversationalist, traveling salesman, tutor, consul, student of acting. Yet in a posthumously published book, *La Vie Henri Brulard*, he asked himself, "What have I been? What am I? . . . I should find it very hard to say."⁶

Katherine Mansfield, whose story one cannot read unmoved, in her youth wrote on New Year's Eve, "I thank God that I am." Much later, when fatal illness laid pitiless hands upon her, she asked anxiously, "Is there a me?"⁷

Reik, in his study of the secret self, says of Hjalmar Ekdal, "He speaks freely of himself, but what he says and how he says it, shows us only how he sees himself, *not how he really is*."⁸

The author of *Faith, Freedom and Selfhood* says of us all, "We are the shrouded individuals, wandering around in search of our own lost reality."⁹

André Breton skeptically asks, "What is beautiful? What is ugly? What is great, strong, weak? What is Carpentier, Renan, Foch? What is myself? Don't know, don't know, don't know!"¹⁰

Marcel Raymond stoutly affirms: "It is impossible to know oneself, and the most clear-sighted man imagines himself, composes and betrays himself before the mirror."¹¹

Colin Wilson is just as sure. "Although all men know that they exist (or take it for granted) they very seldom feel a solid kernel in themselves which they know to be the 'real' Smith or Jones. What

they know as 'themselves' is a changing mirage caused by other people." He continues:

A man is very seldom aware of himself as a person: what he is mainly aware of, when he thinks of himself, is what other people think of him. I know that I change my character according to the person to whom I am talking. . . . If I am talking to some old and famous author . . . I feel young and rebellious. If I am speaking to some very young inexperienced writer I am inclined to feel as if I am ninety-nine with my life's work behind me. Although I know that none of these is the real Colin Wilson, that all are mirages called into existence by the character of the person I am speaking to, I cannot dismiss them and feel differently.¹²

Robert Louis Stevenson, in his story *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, portrays vividly the plight of us all. In all of us is a Mr. Hyde. The Dr. Jekyll we believe ourselves to be is ignorant of, and yet inseparably attached to, this other very real aspect of ourselves.

Who that has ever heard it can forget that when Haydn heard his *Creation* for the first time, he exclaimed in tears, "No, I couldn't have composed that."

UNIVERSAL SELF-IGNORANCE

Our ignorance of ourselves, our real selves, is a commonplace among psychologists. Nothing in fiction rivals the surprise that men and women, in actual life, experience when analysis uncovers to them the hidden self.

Sometimes it is parental influence that has overlaid the child's real self with one that more nearly satisfies parental pride. Often there is too great concern that the boy shall be a "normal boy." So the genius which he might have been is smothered by parental concern that he shall be as sports-minded or as dandified or as money-bent or as success-hypnotized as the neighbors are. The hand that might have "wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre"¹³ merely sweeps weekly wages or stock-market winnings into a greedy pocket. The eye that might have seen in a host of golden daffodils the subject of a poem cares to see only the daft parade of Times Square. The mind that might have led in scientific research is swamped with the statistics of the race track or the baseball diamond. In every such instance there is inevitably unrest as the unrecognized self clamors for recog-

niton and employment. But the unrest is thrust aside in more feverish activity or in resort to peace pills. There is not even a suspicion that oneself is restless because the real self has rested too long beneath the shade of the family tree. The parents have reared a "normal boy" according to their specifications, but a boy who is actually subnormal in relation to his real possibilities.

Sometimes it is the social environment which has created the mirage under which one lives in oblivion of his true self. Too often we are what society wants us to be or tells us that we are. A clothing advertisement in the *New York Times* carried the headline, "The Importance of Being Correct!" It seems that in that case you can be correct for "about \$85.00." Quite a modest sum, if "correctness" is the thing. But it costs a great deal more, if being correct means being what your set or your generation insists you must be! *That* may cost one his very selfhood and all the bright promise of one's youth. Socrates and Luther and Wesley and Lincoln were far from being "correct," but their deviation corrected some of the ills of the world which otherwise would have gone unchallenged. Group-mindedness often means a devastating veto upon the mind which is potentially yours but which will never become the instrument of a creative life unless, by some good fortune, someone or something helps you to discover it.

Harold Rosenberg said once: "The Frenchman has so much tradition he can easily say anything except what he wants to say." What is worse, in America or anywhere else, is that tradition can so completely take over that one does not want to say anything that contradicts it. The best French poetry is "a siege against the cliché."¹⁴ So is the best of everything! But many are so domesticated to what is, that the cliché encompasses all their thinking, or what passes as thinking. They never really can say, "I think." Unless we are willing to equate the "I" with the unreal self that is in control and that is actually an echo of the crowd, we must reply, "No, you do not think thus: it is the folklore of your community or the confusion of the popular mind that is speaking now."

During the recent filibuster against the Civil Rights Bill in the United States Senate, a former Rhodes Scholar and university president solemnly declared that there has been no voting discrimination in large areas of the South; that it is merely apathy that keeps

Negroes from voting there. The *Washington Post* in a strong editorial asked: "Is he doing justice to himself, his position and the dignity of the body he represents by joining in this cabal of know-nothingism?" The answer of course is "no." He is not doing justice to anything, least of all to himself. A sectional state of mind, evolved over a century, was speaking. His real self, his mind that earlier had perceived the follies of McCarthyism and with a courage almost solitary denounced it, was in eclipse. Thank God, in this instance the eclipse was not total. In many instances, it is total and apparently final!

We are estranged from our real selves. That is the verdict of the best theologians of our time. Nor are they merely echoing the existentialists. They are in the great tradition of those who, in one phraseology or another, see us as "fallen creatures." Just when the fall occurred is not agreed. Some see existence itself as a fall. Some locate the disaster early in the life of every individual. No matter! The important thing for us is to realize that we are not ourselves as God created us.

If there is to be a continuing dialogue with the self, that self must be discovered or recovered. In a sense, there is a dialogue going on within the self all the time, between the head and the heart, the private self and the social self, the domestic self and the public self, the dreaming self and the bread-and-butter self. But too often the real self is not participating in either side of the debate. We often condemn ourselves, but the condemnation may belie the real self. We pat ourselves on the back, but if the real self were engaged the pat would be reserved for a worthier occasion. We may cross-examine ourselves, but it is the surface self that is doing the examining and the result is a "hung jury." There is neither conviction nor acquittal.

THE REAL SELF

What is the real self? Those who know tell us that the Russian language is rich in diminutives. Simply by using prefixes and suffixes one can designate a little man, a nice little man, a nice little bearded man, a nice little peasant with a beard. One often wishes the mother tongue lent us such help, especially when trying to designate the real self of each one of us. One says "self" and he may mean the

conscious self, the unconscious self, the assumed self, the operating self, the hidden self. An authority on marital affairs says that there are four selves present at every wedding: the bride as the groom sees her and the bride as she really is; the groom as the bride sees him and the groom as he actually is. One might add that there are several more present: the bride as she was when a girl, the groom as he was when a boy. Neither has completely outgrown the child that was and still is. There is also the bride as she thinks she is and the groom as he is sure he is. Each of these may be called the self and yet how different from each other.

So in trying to identify the real self that is you, some adjectives must be added. That is a bit clumsy, but there seems no escape from it.

THE UNIVERSAL SELF

There is, first of all, the universally human self which we all share. We often use other terms in designating people, but we know that they are people and not animals. When angry, we hiss the word "dog." When in love, we coo, "my dove." When a child smiles up at us, we whisper, "You precious lamb." When we see a hero in action we say he is a "lion." Someone's folly may evoke the epithet "ass." Stubbornness seems to justify "mule." Greed will surely prompt the word "hog." But in every case we know that we are confronted, not with dog or dove or lamb or lion or ass or mule, but with something distinctively human. That is the first thing we must mean when we talk about the self. We sometimes forget that, and deal with people as things. We let them become a number, a statistic, a vote, a tool, a laboratory specimen. Joseph Wood Krutch pungently avows that what is sometimes called the science of man is only a "science-of-what-man-would-be-if-he-were-not-a-man-but-a-machine." A human self is what one actually is—even Khrushchev or Castro. That self is real, so real that all attempts to deal with anyone as a machine are doomed to fail. That ought to be a commonplace, but too often it is not!

Certainly when we talk about the real self, we mean that humanness which we all share with each other. Our side of all the dialogues of life is the human side. We cannot jump out of our skins. The scientist in his search for truth tries to be objective, to see things

as they are and not as they look to a human being. But he never completely succeeds. He is still a man. The motives that impel him are human motives. His sense of values is a human construct. If asked why he conducts his costly experiments, the reasons he gives are human reasons. The theologian knows the peril of anthropomorphism, of thinking of God in human terms. It was against that, that Karl Barth almost shrieked, "God is God and not man!" Surely we must not bring God down to human levels or incarnate Him in sheerly human concepts. The Incarnation never means just that. One very familiar affirmation made about Jesus is that "He is all of God that can get into human life." Once in history so much of God did get into human life that not only did human life truly reveal its immense possibilities, but the divine life has become more intelligible and lovable and adorable. Whenever we talk about the Christlike God, we are talking in human terms. But we are also talking "after the manner of men" when we use the abstractions of theology. The profoundest philosopher in his greatest utterances is still a man, thinking as a man, speaking as a man, however unintelligible he is to the rest of us.

All of which is to say that the real self is a human self. As long as it exists at all, it is human. Our dialogues will not become more creative by any effort to make them less human. We may rightly cry

O for a man to arise in me
That the man I am, may cease to be.¹⁵

But the true purport of such a prayer is that we may become more, not less, human, according to the divine intention for our humanity. True dialogue is not a soulless contact between bloodless abstractions. It is a meeting of warm, throbbing, groping, adventuring, aspiring human selves.

THE UNIQUE SELF

The real self, is therefore what we share with all humanity. But it is also that which no one else shares. It is that which is uniquely "us." "You are absolutely irreplaceable." When Paul Tillich wrote that, he was addressing, not a company of scientific geniuses, nor a gathering of great theologians, nor a concourse of statesmen as-

sembled for a summit conference, nor even a fellowship of eloquent preachers. He was speaking to you and to me. To most of us that seems incredible. As we measure ourselves alongside our neighbors, we are not aware of any special endowments which set us apart from them. We may have attained a certain competence which is not theirs simply because they have a different vocation. There are, perhaps, some emphases, some tones, some attitudes which we have come by, which they do not have in quite the same degree. But all in all, save for the temporary inconvenience to our associates or the bereavement to our families, it does not seem to us that our passing will leave the world much poorer. An eloquent bishop of an earlier generation said one day, "If you want to know how indispensable you are, stick your finger into a bowl of water and then withdraw it. The hole that will be left is the size of the vacancy that will be left by your passage from the scene." When thirteen Navy bandsmen lost their lives in an airplane tragedy in Rio de Janeiro, a Washington paper took occasion to remind us of the fearful possibility that it might have been the President's plane that crashed. Some readers were quite incensed that the editor seemed to be saying that the deaths of thirteen Navy men were inconsequential in comparison with what would have been the tragedy if the President had gone down with the wreck. Of course, the editor did not mean that. He grieved with the rest of us over the untimely end of the bandsmen's lives and the sorrow of their wives and children. But he was merely cognizant that, had it been the President who died thus, the impact upon the affairs of men and nations would have been vastly greater. A President seems much more irreplaceable than any private citizen. We all agree in the dignity of man and the sacredness of human life. But it is very difficult for many of us to think that every individual, especially one's own self, is "absolutely irreplaceable."

One of the most common and most devastating errors in dealing with human beings, whether ourself or another, is the tendency to forget that each one is himself and not another, is not merely a type or an echo or a statistic but a unique individual. Vincent Herr in his contribution to a revealing volume, *Critical Incidents in Psychotherapy*, says pungently: "It is so easy to type and classify humans, forgetting in therapy their eminent uniqueness and inherent value."¹⁸

Charles Stinnette, Jr., in *Faith, Freedom and Selfhood*, also writes significantly: "Many psychologists believe that man does not discover himself within any of the categories used by theorists. Rather, they insist, every human being is unique and individual. . . . What man really is never fits any model."¹⁷

John Macquarrie, writing as a theologian and not as a psychiatrist, is equally certain: "However much my dispositions, abilities, circumstances resembled those of another person . . . there would still be an unbridgeable gap between an existence that is his and an existence that is mine. That I am myself and no one else, is the unaccountable fact at the bottom of this structure of facticity in existence. . . . I am and have to be myself in my world."¹⁸ And finally David Riesman in *The Lonely Crowd* pleads: "One needs to realize that each life is an emergency which happens only once, and the 'saving' of it in character terms justifies care and effort."¹⁹

The real self of each person is a unique self. General George C. Kenney has vividly described one of his fearless flyers in *The Saga of Pappy Gunn*. The tale is summarized in a single sentence: "He lived, died, was buried differently from other people." That does not always seem so conspicuously true of the rest of us, but it nonetheless is the reality of all our lives!

Obviously, if our dialogues with each other and with life itself are to be as relevant and as creative as they ought to be, it becomes quite essential that we should discover our own uniqueness. Undoubtedly that uniqueness is always operating from behind the screen, just as many facets in the unconscious do. But, equally, just as it is important that these hidden facets be uncovered and brought under conscious control, so it is important that the uniqueness, which is our significant difference from others, be discovered and operated under intelligent direction. Otherwise, it can make us merely queer rather than creative, impulsive rather than wise.

DISCOVERING OUR UNIQUENESS

How may this uniqueness be discovered?

The first essential is a conviction that it is there. If it seems to be only the idle fancy of some essayist or preacher, the realist will not waste any time over it. Or if it is accepted as a fact in other lives but not in our own, it will still remain hidden. Often it is confused

with those harmless idiosyncrasies or annoying mannerisms which find their way into the behaviors and attitudes of most of us and which, when pointed out, are dismissed with a smile and a "Yes, I reckon that is *me!*" It may even be identified with the failure to make wise adjustments to the ways of men, or with the distorted logic which leads one into permanent opposition to whatever anyone else proposes. There is no doubt that what is often called uniqueness may be just common stubbornness. It is not sterling individuality but sheer cussedness. Real uniqueness is not to be confused with caprice or whim or crotchet, with fantastic speech or action. It is that in you which makes you irreplaceable, not that which makes everybody wish you could quickly and permanently be replaced by someone more congenial and constructive. For the discovery of that, there are many wise suggestions offered by those whose study of human nature makes them wise counselors.

ATTENTIVENESS TO GOD

First, only God is adequate for the quest. He knows us all so much better than we can ever know ourselves. It is His limitless creativity that makes every leaf on a tree different from every other, and every child born into the world unlike any other that has been or ever will be born. In making us what we are, in contrast with what all others are, He has assumed a responsibility for us which only He can discharge. He is not a hit-and-run Deity. Nor is He a make-and-run Creator. Over against our capacity to ruin ourselves is His power to redeem us from destruction. Over against our ignorance of ourselves is His all-encompassing wisdom. "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered."²⁰ He is able where we are impotent. He is all-seeing love where we, in our egocentricity, are blind even to our own reality. We, therefore, can count on His help in the effort to discover our uniqueness and thus fulfill the purpose He had in mind in our creation. "I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine."²¹ We are not numbers to Him; we are persons intimately known. We are His, in the only way we can be His, namely by His knowledge of ourselves that differentiates us from all others. He will be our guide in this the determinative quest for our real self. He comes to us, each one, saying, "Follow Me, and you will find your real self!"

But we must follow. He will not make the journey of exploration for us and, when it is finished, bring back, from the far country of the soul and lay in our laps, the unique reality of our self. "We may not climb the heavenly steep to bring the Lord Christ down,"²² but we must let the Lord Christ who has come down to us of his own volition, help us to climb the steep of selfhood until "we know as we are known."²³

In such following, we must learn to be attentive to what He is saying to us through events, through other people, through the inner voice. In later chapters, we shall discuss more fully the dialogue with events and with people, through which the voice of God may come to us. This must be said now; the very shock which unexpected events impose upon us often becomes God's voice telling things about ourselves which we never recognized before.

A man of deep devotion to his vocation had rendered a service that distinguished him from his fellows. His distinction had persuaded him that he knew himself very well, what he could do and what he could not do. He was totally unaware, however, of one accent in his selfhood. Then one day something happened that shook him like an earthquake. The ground beneath his feet trembled in a giant convulsion. Structures he had built by laborious toil and sacrifice tumbled in ruins. He stood unhoused and terrified. There was momentary anger and an anguishing sense of injustice. Why should this happen to him? He had certainly not intended anything of the sort. In fact, all his years had been spent in activities that seemed to be a guarantee against such calamity. Fortunately, he had learned not to defy God or doubt Him. So after a few blinding moments he said, "God, what are you trying to say to me now?" In humility he waited on God. Little by little some things became obvious—chiefly some truths about himself. In all his previous experiences one distinctive element in his selfhood had never been recognized. It was a valuable uniqueness, but, like all other values, unless wisely directed it could become a menace. That revelation put into his hands knowledge about himself which is changing the whole course of his life. This has demanded great attentiveness to the God who moves in mysterious ways "His wonders to perform."²⁴ It has also required genuine humility, a readiness to learn facts about oneself which are not flattering and which demand a

revolution in one's way of life. But with us as with him, if, instead of confusing anger or wrathful pride, there is the spirit that is willing to be taught, we shall again and again find a new path to the inwardness which hitherto has been hidden from our eyes. We shall come upon something in our nature which if rightly disciplined will greatly increase our effectiveness, but which if unrecognized and untutored may destroy us and those with whom we live and labor.

THE STOUT HEART

Courage is also a very necessary condition of self-discovery. The world does not always welcome uniqueness. The story of innovators is not one of plush-lined chariots but of crude tumbrils on the way to the scaffold. There is much greater likelihood of a cross than of a crown. The little uniquenesses may fare rather well. They relieve the boredom of life for many who are surfeited with an abundance of what-is. The extra curl on the conventional coiffure, or the occasional fillip in a conversation that is full of bromides, or the new phrasing of an old dogma, or the rechristening of a familiar idol will not invite trouble. But let one's uniqueness really challenge the status quo, ridicule a beloved custom, disturb the conventional way of life, impeach American conceit, make anyone feel somewhat less than a paragon of virtue or a pundit of knowledge, then uniqueness will discover what it is to be unpopular, left out, greeted with tilted noses, banished from the blue book! *Time* magazine described Roger Blough as "a warm likeable I.B.M. machine." But when the so-called machine begins to turn out unwelcome answers, it finds itself characterized by quite different adjectives!

Recall the plight of artists who let their uniqueness express itself. Picasso resolved to discover everything afresh for himself. He is credited with giving "the temple of art its most thorough house-cleaning so far."²⁵ But he also faced the fate of the man of superior quality, "whose very gifts outlaw him from society and force him to wander homeless." Art experts record that "Manet's blithe defiance of contemporary taste . . . distinctly marks a great moment in the evolution of modern painting."²⁶ "Manet," said Renoir, "is a new epoch in painting." Yet, again and again his canvases were rejected by the official salon. "Each new departure in form and

color was greeted with public derision and he endured so much abuse that he began to develop a feeling of persecution."²⁷ Gauguin, Van Gogh, and Toulouse-Lautrec have been described as "the three painting martyrs" of their period. "Their tragedy was that they happened along at the wrong time."²⁸ Their glory was that, time or no time, public taste to the contrary notwithstanding, they lived for and up to their own uniqueness!

Leslie Fiedler is a literary critic of our own generation. His recent volume, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, is hailed as superb "in elaborateness of argument and richness of reference, in moral urgency and in intellectual intensity." Recently he revealed the secret of his own work. He sees literary criticism as "an act of moral engagement, in which tact, patience, *insolence* and piety consort strangely but satisfactorily together." That word "insolence" hits one in the eye! It can have a very sinister meaning. Yet he who would find his own uniqueness and turn it loose in the world will have to have a degree of insolence. Combined with the word "piety" as Fiedler does, it really means a kind of reverent but brave independence. It means daring to say "no" when others are saying "yes." One must be ready to stand upright when others are bending the knee to some social Baal. He must be able to get along without applause and to live with public scorn for his brashness. Of course, he is not insolent in the hateful sense. He only seems so to the multitude who consider every departure from the accepted norm as insolence—and they usually do just that! "Insolence" must *always* be conjoined with respect for those who differ as well as with generous and loyal reverence for abiding values. Otherwise, it easily becomes haughty, impudent, and rude. But the career of real fidelity to one's own uniqueness requires a spirit that can defy the commonplace however glorified it may be by the conforming crowd.

Because fidelity to one's uniqueness requires courage, the discovery of that uniqueness is likely to be made only by one who has a stout heart. The fear of being different can easily make one blind to every symptom of difference that rises into consciousness, or prompt him to suppress it before it gets into action. And certainly if one is afraid of deviation he will not spend any effort in trying to find that in himself whose expression would result in departure from the approved patterns and styles. It would be a tragic tale if

one could write the stories of men and women who, on the very verge of that discovery of themselves which would have made them pioneers of a new day, shrank from further self-knowledge, and so closed the door on their most precious reality and spent their days in being echoes of the familiar and the outworn. A little dialogue with their uniqueness might have transformed their lives, lifted them out of the rut of custom, made them guides to new frontiers. So they remained mute and inglorious, or singers of hit tunes that are forgotten with the dying year, or adherents of formulas that have long since lost their power, or idolaters of vanishing gods.

The man who would discover his own uniqueness must have not only the humility that can learn from the disturbing challenge of others but the courage that can stay by his own aptitudes and appraisals. He must have "the nerve of failure." Unafraid to fail in the eyes of men, he will not fail his real self. Not failing his real self, he, in that respect at least, is true to his destiny, to the divine intention written in his real selfhood.

SIX

The Dialogue with the Self—II

The revolutionary dialogue with the self requires the discovery of the real self. Most of us are but dimly aware that we are anything more than, or different from, the everyday self which we see in the mirror or which is thrust upon us by the routines of life, our work and our play, our successes and our failures, our joys and our sorrows. We take ourselves for granted and so we never grant the possibility that there is within us that of which we are ignorant. We have taken our measure, so to speak, and assume that the figures are exact and final. We often wish that the estimate were mistaken, but we have become so habituated to it that we accept it, just as we accept the shape of our noses or the color of our hair. We know that plastic surgery can do something about the nose and that the beauty parlor can change the tint of one's coiffure, but we find it difficult to believe that the self with which we have been living can ever be anything but what we have found it to be in our struggle for bread and a place in the sun. It is the contention of this book that our real self is often quite a different thing than our conception of it. What we have seen of it is only a profile, and as inadequate as a profile may be to convey the reality. We need to take another look, to get another exposure, if we are to know ourselves, that in us which is uniquely "us."

Some techniques are valuable for anyone who is on quest for his uniqueness. We need to take more account of what we deeply feel. Ira Progoff, the well-known psychologist, accentuates that: "It may be upon the rather exalted plane . . . of the religious seer,

the dedicated philosopher, the scientific seeker for truth. But it may also be in the more prosaic terms of the individual who fulfills his urge for survival in the person of his children. . . . It may show itself in the person who labors to create a work of art, a painting, a piece of sculpture or some other enduring object."¹ Everyone should pay attention to that which he deeply feels—not momentarily on special hair-raising occasions, but what persists day after day, calling to him out of the depths of his soul, stirring in vivid dreams, a kind of homesickness of the spirit, pleading for actions and responses and dedications which hitherto have been refused or not even considered.

Wanda Landowska, when a little girl, wrote, "I only dream of one thing—to play Bach and Mozart." She folded the paper on which her dream had been written, and sealed it in an envelope marked "To be opened when I am grown up." But the very next day she broke open the envelope and began to live for and by her dream. At fourteen, she was a graduate of the Warsaw Conservatory and a concert pianist. She became Bach's pianist laureate. She revived the harpsichord, and Albert Schweitzer, after hearing her, wrote, "Anyone who has heard Wanda Landowska play Bach's Italian Concerto on her wonderful harpsichord, finds it hard to understand how it could ever be played again on the piano." Her recordings won cheers as one of the most important contributions to the interpretations of Mozart. She listened to the depths of her own spirit. Listening, she discovered her uniqueness and a career that has left the world musically richer and wiser.²

Aptitude tests often help in the discovery of one's uniqueness. Analysis is sometimes indispensable if one is to uncover the reality of oneself that has been stifled by the smothering love of parents, frightened into hiding by humiliating experiences on the playground, chloroformed into insensibility by the glammers of society. Attention has been called to the "cosmetic self." The meaning is obvious. Just as cosmetics conceal the reality and the cosmetic face is not the real face, so the cosmetic self is one that is the result of efforts to cover up what the social milieu regards as offensive, and to create mental complexions that are "the thing," socially speaking. One must admit that facial cosmetics are sometimes an improvement over the reality. But one cannot admit that it is good to cover up

the self that is uniquely "us" with the synthetic selves that belie our real character and conceal from our own eyes, even, that in us which is different and is our chance to make a real contribution to the world. Some have worn this false self so long that it seems "natural." Only analysis will peel off the cosmetics and enable us to get a good look at our reality in the mirror of another's scrutiny.

But whatever the techniques necessary, our first business is to find our own uniqueness and enter into dialogue with it. There is no other way to the destiny to which God is calling us.

The dialogue with our uniqueness, if faithfully conducted, will be an effective antidote to the complacency which often inhibits effort.

We remember the woman who confessed that vanity was her besetting sin. "I can scarcely refrain from applause every time I see myself in the mirror." One who heard her say that commented, "That is not vanity—that is imagination." Actually it was both. As long as we live in imagination, we are likely to live in vanity! We are likely to live in imagination if we never see ourselves except in the mirror, for there is reflected only the cosmetic self. Only the quest for the uniqueness that lies hidden from the habitually casual glance of our world-confused vision will bring imagination face to face with facts. Imagination thus sobered will cease to intoxicate and narcotize the spirit. Aroused by the contrast between what one is and is doing and what one's uniqueness calls upon one to be and to do, one is more likely to undertake some genuine revision.

That revision may involve both what we are doing and the way we do it. For some, it will mean a change in vocation. The way by which they are earning a living is denying them the life they might have. Their daily work is a daily frustration of their real self. They may receive a good salary, but they are not giving a good account of their capacities. They may be in a place of honor, but they are not honoring their real gifts. Some of the happiest memories of a minister's life are of the men and women who have found their unique selves and have, sometimes at great sacrifice, changed their vocation to one in which their uniqueness has found adequate expression. Society is richer because of the change, and their own lives have become a joy. Sometimes it has been a shift from business

to the ministry, sometimes from the ministry to business; sometimes from civil service to the church, sometimes from the church to government; sometimes from a college professorship to personal counseling, sometimes from self-employment to academic life; sometimes from the steel mill to the pulpit; sometimes from the pulpit to industry.

One of the problems of our time is the increasing difficulty, for many, of finding a place in society where their uniqueness can have adequate expression. Erich Fromm, one of the distinguished psychologists of America, has pointed out so clearly how society as it now functions, engenders dreams which cannot possibly be fulfilled, and how the resulting conflict between what men desire and what is, is the fertile cause of neuroses and despairs. It needs to be recognized, also, that there seems to be in many corporations no room for the uniqueness of the individual. The tragedy of the "organization man" is often just the angering intolerance with which the organization greets his uniqueness, and the terrible pressure with which it seeks to squeeze him into conformity. He is "browbeaten by experts," beleaguered by "mass-produced platitudes," patternized by *esprit de corps*, belabored by club slogans, politely but powerfully subjected to "class-orientation," as is so vividly portrayed in *The Organization Man*. He would like to break free and become himself. But where shall he go? What can he do to earn a livelihood? How can he provide security for wife and children?

These are agonizing questions. Yet, as Paul Tillich says, "Full self-affirmation is imperative," and that means not merely the partial self, which is all we may know at the moment, but the hidden self, one's uniqueness.³

For many, such self-affirmation cannot be had by change of vocation but by change *within* vocation. That may be achieved by alterations in the way one's work is done; by a revision of personal relationships so that what-one-is gets into operation in contact with people; by commitment to civic activities, volunteer social services, human betterment organizations, public charities, educational associations, church worship and fellowship; by creative leisure; by useful hobbies.

One of the most fulfilled selves I know is a man whose vocation could not offer him what his uniqueness needed. It was an honor-

able vocation, but a limited one. He had entered it early in life when necessity was upon him to support his mother, and there was nothing else open that would pay the wages his situation demanded. So the years had come and gone without bringing the opportunities he craved. Now he was too old to change. But what of himself he could not pour into the job, he did pour into the community. He was the good neighbor, always available when sickness required someone to run errands or do the chores. He was the kindly, understanding counselor, never too weary to hear the problems that perplexed youth and age. He was the unordained visitor who knew where loneliness sat, and found time to offer companionship. He was the man who rang the church bell when no one else would, and cleaned the church building when there was no janitor to do it, and solicited funds to keep the minister's salary from falling too far in arrears. His job alone would have stifled him. His neighborliness and his Christian devotion gave fulfillment to that in him which made life, even in that small town, real living! He was unique, and his dialogue with his uniqueness made him a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.

In some such fashion or another, this dialogue with one's uniqueness must be begun and continued. Conditions are often most unfavorable, but the will to do it can always find a way. Each man's problem is to be himself. To be an imitation is lese majesty! To wear a mask in order to please his contemporaries is to be false both to them and to himself. To let what he really is die because the world does not welcome it, is to commit suicide by neglect. To imprison his uniqueness behind the bars of custom is to rob society of the deviation it needs for its health, and to dishonor the God who endowed him for the sake of the necessary change.

THE AUTHENTIC SELF

When we have sought and found our uniqueness, and keep it in creative dialectic with our conscious self, we have a still greater discovery to make. No single phrase can encompass it. Perhaps it can best be designated as the *authentic self*. Bultmann and Macquarrie and the existentialists have so named it. It is not an invention of this author. But it is as satisfying as any other phrase that

comes to mind. It is at least a good symbol if not an exact and complete description.

The *unique self* is that which differentiates one man from another. The *authentic self* is that which *every one* is meant to be, but is often unrecognized and lost from sight.

The authentic self is that which is rightly called the "depth dimension of personality." It is that which is more than cleverness, more than genius, more than vocational aptitude, more than masculinity or femininity, more than a tendency to introversion or extroversion, more than the condition resulting from psychic traumas, more than hereditary traits, more than deliberately cultivated responses to life. It is that which no brainwashing can destroy and no demonic indoctrination can obliterate. It is something "built into" man, as nest-building in the canary or the migratory mechanism in the waterfowl. *It is man's affinity for God, his need of God, his capacity to enter into fellowship with God; it is that in man which is made for God, hungers for God, is forever homesick until God be found.*

Freudian psychology failed to find it. Freud did uncover much that we need to know about ourselves, especially the dynamics of the subconscious and the unconscious mind. He has helped immensely in the therapy of disordered selves. But just as the diagnosis of, and the surgery that removes, a malignant tumor does not at all verify a surgeon's description of a patient's personality, neither does the Freudian surgery of the sick mind entitle it to offer an appraisal of the whole person. What some Freudians have given us is truly "a slander of the self and the Creator."⁴

Jung has done much better. He sought to comprehend man in his wholeness. He approached the unconscious depths affirmatively and constructively. He treated religious experience, not merely as a "psychological symptom to be diagnosed but as a valid and authentic part of the human personality."⁵ Ira Progoff, one of his disciples, avows confidently that the frustration of modern man does not arise from sexual repressions but "from repressing those urgings at the core of his nature that require him to be a creative spiritual organism or bear the marks of his insufficiency."⁶

Jesus was the most authentic self in history. "In Him," said Wil-

liam Adams Brown, "I see the picture of the kind of man I know I ought to be."⁷ It was not merely His eloquent words about God, but the sense that His words came from God; it was not only that He felt an affinity for God, but that He lived in fellowship with God; it was not that His hunger for God kept Him all night alone on the mountaintop in prayer, but that the will of God was His meat and drink; it is not merely that theology calls Him the Son of God, but that He lived like a loyal Son in perfect trust and obedience to His Father; it is not merely that men account His life to be a real and unique incarnation of God, but that His whole life had a God-reference and was a God-revelation. This was His authentic selfhood. And it is ours, this orientation to God and communion with God!

That we have not realized it and made it our conscious actuality is the reason for the unhappiness and misfortunes and miseries and malformations of our lives.

Because Jesus, whose supreme hunger was for God, lived with and in God, His was a serenity and a joy which no circumstances could annul. He could on the very eve of His crucifixion speak, not of being crucified, but of being glorified!

Because Jesus was linked to God in perfect trust, His life was free from fear. His security was not in wealth nor in personal power nor in political favor, all of which are precarious and contingent at any time, and in His case were non-existent. Rather did He depend on God whom He had found to be utterly dependable. The result was a boldness that could challenge entrenched evil and shatter established tradition. And when His enemies, with two hundred soldiers, came out to take Him before the authorities for the purpose of killing Him, He went out to them unafraid. They came with lamps and torches, although there was a full moon. Evidently they expected Him to hide among the trees or in obscure hillside nooks. Instead, He came out to meet them, asking in calm composure, "Whom are you seeking?" When they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth," he replied simply, "I am He." Never in His life was there a sign of the fears which "make cowards of us all."

Because Jesus had commerce with the power of God, He was unterrified by the tremendous responsibilities which were upon Him

for the salvation of the whole world. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."⁸ Nobody else in history believed that he bore such weight of responsibility. A candidate for the presidency startled some of us by his confident statement that he was ready to assume responsibility for securing and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the nations. Most of us have read in contrast the words of Lincoln as he left Springfield to take up the burdens of the presidency. Many of us still weep when we recall those words and sense the anxiety that was upon his soul. Truly great men do not lightly take such burdens upon themselves. Nor did Jesus. But nowhere do we find Him running away. He cared greatly. He wept when rejected. His human nature shrank from the Cross. He grieved that the crowd which applauded Him would leave Him. He pitifully wondered if His best friends would go too. But He did not suffer the gnawing anxiety which afflicts us. He apparently did not worry over the outcome. He might be lifted up from the earth on the nail-driven Cross but he was sure that the result would be that the world would be drawn to that Cross as if by divine magnet.

Obviously, Jesus was not at home in the world of men. "If the world hate me, it will hate you." It did, and it will!

The world of *nature* was God's world and Jesus loved it all, the lilies of the field, the sparrows nesting in the eaves, the soaring birds as they swept the heavens with their glistening wings, the grass that carpeted the meadows, the sheep grazing on the hillside, the rows of ripening grain. God seemed very near to him under the silent stars. And when the last agonies drew near, out into the garden He went for solace and strength.

Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him;
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came. . . .

Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.⁹

But the world of men was different. It was a world that corrupted worship, that clung to tradition rather than the truth, that was sunk in externals, that acted more as if Satan rather than God were its Father, that had murder in its heart when its authority was challenged. Yet from that world He would not withdraw. He was not an escapist. A monastery was not for Him. Nor did He want His disciples to withdraw. "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world."¹⁰ He himself would not flee from its perils, but would stay by and lay down His life for it.

Yet in all this He did not become "The Stranger." There was about Him none of the lostness which seems to afflict so many in our time. He apparently never concluded that "everybody was against Him" even when "all . . . forsook Him, and fled."¹¹ He did not act like one confronted with a hostile universe. He was at home with God, and so the hostility of men could not awaken hostility in Him. The repudiation by men could not make Him feel like an alien or an exile. He was not reduced to the plight of one who feels that he must conform at the loss of his essential self. He was not suppressed, but free and creative. He was authentically himself as the Son of God. There was about Him none of the everydayness, the averageness, the secondhandness of one who is cowed by the world. He was free in God, free to be what God wanted Him and all the rest of us to be!

In the presence of His life, we begin to realize how *inauthentic* we are. We are plagued with fears because we seek our security in this world, and this world cannot provide it. We are the prey of constant anxiety because we are aware of many responsibilities and our little power to fulfill them. We are full of unrest because, although we know it not, our only rest is in God, and we have not consciously encountered Him or placed our lives in His keeping. We have encountered symbols of Him in the rituals and terminology of the church; but the symbols no longer satisfy, and there is no food in terminology. Because we have not found anything better, we become imitators of folks who are as inauthentic as we are. We seek security among those who themselves are one big insecurity. We try to find refuge from anxiety by joining the crowd of the anxious. We lose our uniqueness in conformities. Our capacity for creation is smothered by compliance with the formulas of our set.

We are mediocre and mechanical and musty with the odors of social and cultural decay. Even when we turn to religion, it is only to accepted forms and conventional jargons and pious bromides about God. We never find real freedom among our fellows because we are slaves to their opinions and their phobias and their "crushes." We are still wanderers over the face of the earth who have not found our home.

Nor will we, until we begin a real dialogue with authenticity. And since as yet our own authentic self has not been discovered, we cannot hold dialogue with it. *What we can do, however, is to bet our lives that in the selfhood of Jesus is the clue to our own authentic self, and enter into dialogue with that!*

THE DIALOGUE AT WORK

This dialogue should be a day-by-day, action-by-action affair, between our everyday, habitual, conforming, anxious self and the selfhood disclosed in Jesus. How does this practice look in comparison with His? Is this attitude in harmony with His? Am I being in this situation what I can be if my authentic self, as seen in Him, is given control? Are my fears legitimate appraisals of my plight or are they the result of my too great involvement in, and dependence upon, the world, contrary to His independence and His detachment? Is this anxiety that pursues me day after day justified by some impending doom, or is it the dismay which results from my not trusting God as Jesus did? Is my obvious mediocrity the actual register of my abilities, or is it the result of my being bogged down in "the chain mail of etiquette" which Jesus spurned? Are my hesitations the wise cautions of one who knows his limitations, or are they the tardiness of one who has to wait until his trial balloons indicate which way the popular wind is blowing, something which Jesus never did?

A generation ago, Charles Sheldon stirred the church with a book, *What Would Jesus Do?* Churchmen who read it were painfully aware that if they asked themselves that question, they would be confronted with many changes in their way of life. The book has long since been tossed aside as impractical and inadequate. No man is wise enough to know what Jesus would do in every situation, and if he did, it still would leave unanswered the question, "What

should I do?" Jesus' vocation is not ours, and our capacities are not His.

This dialogue is something quite different. It proposes that we recognize in Jesus our authentic self and that we ask ourselves in every situation what His trust in God, His detachment from the "vain world's golden store," His confidence in the power of God, His resulting freedom of spirit would lead us to do.

The Late Liz is the story of one of the most inauthentic women of our time. By her dialogue with the authentic Jesus, she has moved out of her submergence in the tipsy world of high society into the fellowship of the redeemed. Elizabeth Hatch Burns tells her own story in her own way, sometimes shockingly to our less sophisticated tastes, but convincingly! Born into a millionaire's home, she found too much money, too much drink, too many men, the road to despair and suicide. Her effort to do away with her frustrated life did not quite succeed. In the hospital where she had been called back from the gates of death, she encountered God. Then began the long, hard road back. There were heartaches innumerable, disappointments almost unbearable, defeats that seemed final and fatal. But happily she had been attracted to Jesus. When choices were to be made, she thought of Him and His choices. When incurable enmities were to be faced, she remembered how He faced His enemies. When her strength was tested to the limit, she thought of the march to Calvary. Listen to her:

To love someone who was kicking you out sounded extraordinarily ridiculous but it was not ridiculous; it was Christ's idea. He repeated it again and again, and if there was ever anyone who was *not* ridiculous, it was the Christ. So while as yet I was unable to subscribe wholly to His idea, I had to subscribe wholly to Him. . . . I died a little now. I cried: "No! I will love You but I cannot love Jim." . . . "Yes," a voice said, "for by loving all men, all men know that you love Me." . . . To sacrifice, with no hope of credit, one's feelings, one's time, one's energy, one's interest to another is a form of love. It had to be, for unselfishness *is* love. It had to be, to work to ease another's embarrassment at the dirty deal he is handing you.¹²

Then, one day she hears Jesus say, "Your faith hath made you whole." She asked herself what that might mean. She wrote:

I, Liz Hatch, desire a faith that makes me greater than Liz Hatch. A faith that humbles, and at the same time exalts, that asserts that all Christians can come to be small christs, first in embryo, later in action. The faith that makes whole, is an awful willingness to take a chance on trying to be this small christ, to quit paddling in safe harbors and dare to try untried depths, trusting Him and therefore ourselves.¹³

So she quit paddling in safe harbors and found herself on new voyages to a richer life for herself and for others touched by her now authentic life.

The great and imperishable meaning of Jesus for us all is that in Him we see the God who created both the world and us. We also see the divine intention in creating us and setting us in such a world. We see our authentic self, therefore. In continuing dialogue with that self, our inauthentic self has constant rebuke and challenge and the promise of transformation and transfiguration.

Marcel Legaut became enmeshed in the world and estranged from himself. Then one day Christ appeared on the scene. In this Man of Galilee and Gethsemane and Golgotha, he saw an authentic being, who though in the world was not of the world, who was His true self and not a reflection of a thousand world-smothered selves. Christ awakened in him a desire to find his own authentic being. But how could he? He tried it, as so many others have, in increased activity, but found only weariness. He tried it in contemplation of beauty, but found himself ensnared in memories of earthly beauty. He tried it in the rejection of all that he knew was not himself, but found he had only a ghost on his hands. He tried it in violent attack on the wall that separated him from his true self, but found that the wall was stronger than ever. He gave way to despair in the hope that, when nothing was left, the real something would appear. Then at last he was persuaded that only He who had created within him this passion for reality would be able to fulfill it. In the adoration of the earthly life of Jesus, he saw himself reflected. The Passion of Jesus led him "down the descending road at the end of which I had grasped hold of my being in denying it." Then one day he found in Jesus, not merely the Master who teaches, the Guide who leads, but He who creates!¹⁴

SEVEN

The Dialogue with Events

Man is man only when he enters into dialogue with events. Otherwise, he is just a biochemical organism in collision with other things, organic and inorganic, or an animal whose instincts compel it to use some things and reject others.

Man is a creature who is alive to meanings. He is not content to know size, weight, chemistry, color, energy, taste, odor, and the like. He wants to know what an object means. What can it do or what will it do to his interests, ambitions, and loves? Will its use promote the welfare of himself and those who are dear to him? Will it make the world better or worse? Will it make life more satisfying, or less? He wants to know the news, but for him the news is not merely a report of happenings but a promise of happiness or a threat of unhappiness to humanity. Khrushchev is not merely a strange phenomenon but a surly peril. The ICBM is not just a scientific marvel; it may be an international madness. Satellites sailing around the earth are not only an awesome achievement of science; they are a hair-raising possibility of catastrophe.

Events, big and little, personal and social, have for man not only factuality but significance. They assure or they assail his values. They encourage him to continue what he is doing or they demand changes. They abet his self-approval or they challenge it. They beget hope or they darken the future with despair. They add zest to his toil or they leave him nerveless and bored. They thrill him to the extent that he asks only for "the wages of going on and not to

die," or they demoralize him so completely that he asks no wages but only the privilege of dying soon, the sooner the better!

Our quest is for meanings that mean something to our sense of values. What our values are depends in part upon our rearing, our associations, our faith. For some, individuality has no value. They seek to lose themselves in the Great All. For the Christian, the individual is priceless. No society that is careless of individuals, no future that swallows the individual in an undifferentiated universe, has any appeal to him. For some in America, apparently, the impersonal has great charm. Laws, principles, energies that are reliable, predictable, dependable seem preferable to personality that in its freedom is unpredictable, uncontrollable, capable of good and ill, wisdom and folly. For that reason, these people refuse to believe that God is personal. They prefer the terms "Being," "Supreme Being." For the rest of us, however, personality is the supreme value. We have no desire to foster any education or support any government, or practice any religion that lightly regards personality, reduces men to robots, or sets an impersonal Reality on the throne of the universe.

For all of us, the meaning of events is their relation to our sense of values. For the discovery of that meaning, a constant dialogue is indispensable. One can be passive toward events, letting them come and go as they will, calling them fate or chance, learning nothing from them, becoming driftwood on the stream of time, reeds shaken by the wind, victims of circumstance. Or one can rate events in the light of his little egocentric dreams and hopes, bemoaning those that are at war with him, perhaps "to take up arms against a sea of troubles," and, if defeated, going down with a shout of defiance, or, if temporarily victorious, sailing ahead with determination until a more vicious storm leaves him just another "brave heart asleep in the deep," where only the waves sing his requiem along with others who will at last meet the same doom. Or one can envision a caring God, in a universe where there are all sorts of good and evil contingencies, but where there are also eternal certainties—a universe where much is left to man's choices but where God is in action, using His divine freedom to avert man's misuse of his freedom; a universe, therefore, where there are ultimate values related

to man's personality and offering it perfect fulfillment; a universe, therefore, where it behooves man to discover those ultimate values and make them his own forever, and thus to live forever as a value-seeking and value-finding person in fellowship with the God of all values, God himself the Supreme Value.

If one is to be that, it is incumbent that he carry on a constant dialogue with events, great and small, for it is through events that true values are discovered, false values exposed, and life is thus brought on its way to the experience of ever nobler meanings.

"That was not an incident; that was an event." A speaker was referring to something in his life that had great meaning for him. It was not incidental or coincidental. It was eventful!

Life is full of incidents. Many things take place as a matter of course. There is no place for them in memory. They fall like leaves in autumn, and are soon forgotten. Once the leaves made a tree more beautiful; consumed the carbon dioxide in the city's air; furnished grateful shade from the burning heat of the summer's sun. But their mission is done and "the place that knew them remembers them no more." So in every life things take place, and then the place is taken from them. They seem to be incidents only, with no great impact upon the life. At the moment, we are grateful for them but in a day or two we cannot even recall them. They are "gone with the wind."

But some things that take place become for us events. They shake us out of our routines. They shock us into unforgetting attention. They wrest from us that which we prized, or impose upon us that which we abhorred. They rob us of our beloved or enrich us with undying friendships. They reduce an exciting life to boredom, or they lift life to a permanently new level of adventure. They insert plaguing mystery or awaken delightful understandings. They slam some doors in our faces, or they open doors to opportunities we never dreamed could be ours. They wound us or heal wounds so perfectly that no scars remain. They break the heart, or they give us new heart. They darken the sky with clouds that threaten hurricanes of disaster, or they chase away the darkness and usher in the sunshine of long and happy days. They raise a wall between us and God, or they bring God so near that it seems we could thrust out a hand and touch Him. They seem to make an end of all that

has given worth to life, or they come upon us like the inauguration of new beginnings and permanent bliss.

Incidents and events! Perhaps it is a false distinction. Have not we who have lived a long time discovered that what at the time seems incidental has proved to be eventful? What appeared to be a mere turning of a corner in an afternoon stroll, in actuality gave life a permanent change in direction. A chance encounter that seemed of momentary consequence only, turned out to be the entrance upon a transforming friendship. A simple letter of appreciation became pregnant with destiny. A doorbell rung on a customary round was the first tolling bell of unwelcome death to a life dream!

So perhaps we ought to change our appraisals. Maybe the antithesis between incident and events should be dismissed. Maybe all that happens is of consequence. That has been the insistence of the great spirits whom we call saints. One of them wrote: "We should give up our whole existence to God, from the strong and positive conviction that while we are faithfully endeavoring to follow Him, the occurrence of every moment is agreeable to His immediate will and permission."¹ De Caussade is confident at this point: "All that is effected within us and about us and through us, involves and hides His divine action. . . . Could we pierce the veil which obscures it, and were we vigilant and attentive . . . we would recognize His action in all that befell us. At every event we would exclaim, *Dominus est*—it is the Lord! And we would feel each circumstance of our life an especial gift from Him."²

Many of us will have to alter that picture a bit. We cannot identify every happening with the Lord. Nor can we think of each circumstance in itself as "an especial gift from Him." The New Testament affirms that Jesus accepted the Cross, and that God was with Jesus through that terrible agony, and that Jesus believed that God would use the Cross as a means of world redemption. Yet it affirms with equal realism, that "Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot"³ and inspired the bargain that gave Jesus to his enemies. Many events in history and in individual life have some other inspiration than God! Satan has not passed from the scene. Nor has the satanic disappeared from the hearts of men. It seems to some of us blasphemy to say that the occurrence of every moment is

agreeable to God's immediate will. Paul speaks of the mind that is set on the flesh.⁴ By flesh he means everything that is outside of God and against God's will. There are events every day that are horribly disagreeable to the will of men and women in whom God dwells, and we must believe that they are decidedly not agreeable to God.

But while we do not identify every event with God, we can believe that God is in every event, either as the cause of its good or as the effort to correct its evil. Events happen in spite of God but, despite their character, He is there to give those events significance to all who are alert to Him. We cannot avow that each circumstance is a direct gift from God, but we do believe that a gift from God can attend each circumstance, and, if we enter into a dialogue with circumstance, God will bestow the gift He has in readiness for the man who will let circumstance turn his attention to God.

The dialogue with events does not imply the acceptance of them any more than creative dialogue with persons involves easy assent to all that they say or are. Nor does it imply angry rebellion against events any more than dialogue with another person requires that we shall fling ourselves in hot repudiation against his position or himself.

Real dialogue requires, first of all, as we have earlier seen, an open-mindedness which inquires of another what he believes and why, what his statements mean and how he arrives at such meaning. Therefore, as events come along, our first business is to inquire what they mean, what God wants them to mean to us, what God is trying to say to us through them.

If that be done sincerely and with humble but inquisitive mind, it is amazing what events may mean and what we may become because of them. "Every concrete hour allotted to him . . . is speech for the man who is attentive," says Martin Buber.⁵ And Archbishop William Temple avers, "The spiritually sensitive mind can be in personal communion with God in and by means of all its experience."⁶

THE DIALOGUE BEGINS

The dialogue may begin with the commonplace events of the day. One asks, "How did this happen? Why did it happen? What is

its significance for the goals I seek?" Often the answers will be obvious the moment we inquire.

Sometimes these questions will find their answers in an intelligent analysis of the events themselves. "Why this accident? Why this sorrowful break in a precious human relationship? Why did I lose my job? Why this good fortune? Why this unexpected and thrilling friendship? Why this amazing opportunity? Why this experience of creativity that has turned my work inside out?"

A government psychiatrist recently reported on a case to which he had been assigned by the court. The man was a social problem. His wife loved him, but his neighbors feared him. The usual disciplines were ineffective. He was a "repeater." The psychiatrist said, "He is simply unable to learn from experience." Most of us are able, but we do not take time enough to learn what experience has to say to us. We go on making the same mistakes, blaming God and bad luck and the selfishness of others for what has gone wrong, and taking the credit for all that goes right. So we are in confusion much of the time and inferior all the time.

If we only permitted it to do so, a costly automobile collision could tell us that we are driving too fast, or that we are "distracted from distraction by distraction," or that we are too much concerned with scenery and not enough with the safety of ourselves and others. An accident that costs us a hand could warn us against thinking of too many other things than the high-powered machine which we are operating and could emphasize the rule, "This one thing I do." The disruption of a promising friendship might reveal to us that we are like Jean-Baptiste Clamence in *The Fall*, who confessed, "I used to advertise my loyalty, and I don't believe there is a single person I loved that I didn't eventually betray."⁷ The loss of a highly satisfactory job could say to us something we never dared to say to ourselves, namely, that we are obstinate, self-willed, conceited, inefficient. A recent cartoon presents an employee of a research corporation "on the carpet" before his employer who is saying to him, "Carter, it is a long time since you came in with a real break-through." Many a man who claims that he has been "broken" by his company, should permit his demotion to tell him that he broke *himself* because he did *not break through!*

Dialogue with events is not always pleasant, but it is always salu-

tary. One may learn about himself what he has never guessed and his best friends cannot tell him. Here again honesty, courage, intelligence in analysis are essential. Otherwise, the dialogue will result only in further self-deception and ruinous delusion.

The opposite aspect of events can also be the occasion of informing dialogue. The fortunate escape from death does not mean that "God takes care of drunk men and fools," or that you are His special favorite who will always be the beneficiary of a providence that curbs the lightning and turns aside the floods that would engulf you, as you have too lightly assumed. A thoughtful survey of the event will open your eyes to the coincidental nature of your escape, and will make you less liable to fall into the dangerous presumption that God's care will always atone for your carelessness, and will put you on your prayerful precaution in the future.

The unexpected golden opportunity that seems to have fallen into your lap is worth a careful scrutiny too. You may think it a windfall and come to depend upon windfalls for that which only hard work, alert attention, and superior service can guarantee. A minister found himself to his great surprise invited to give the Lyman Beecher Lectures at Yale, an honor that comes to only a few ministers in any generation. That was the last honor that he could have dreamed in his most buoyant moments. It seemed like one of those merciful benefactions that life sometimes appears to bestow without much discrimination. While the Lectures were being given, his host, the dean, said to him, "Would you like to know why you were invited to give these Lectures?" "Yes," was the eager reply. The dean then told how one hot August Sunday he had dropped into a New England church to worship. There was a visiting minister in the pulpit that day. The dean was so impressed that he said to his wife, "We must have that man come to Yale." The dean continued, "That man was you, and that is why you are here now." Then the man understood that his opportunity had come because on one Sunday in August, when he had agreed to supply a pulpit as a matter of courtesy to the local minister, and when the temptation was to take it easy before an indifferent congregation, he had prepared and offered his best. The dialogue with that event emphasized once more that no occasion is trifling and that no opportunity to preach the gospel should be anything less than a chal-

lence to one's best! What that dialogue has meant to him all the years since only eternity can reveal.

The coming of a deep, abiding, stimulating friendship is certainly an event of immense significance. The richest joys, the greatest inspirations, the most valuable counsels, the most serene experiences of human life have their stimulus here. Here again one may thank his lucky stars or offer a *Te Deum* and let it go at that. But if one does, one may miss one of the greatest lessons of life. That lesson is couched in arresting terms in the Bible, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares."⁸

In the long and beautiful history of friendship, it has been written again and again that the best friends often arrive as strangers who might easily have been turned away from the door of one's house or one's heart. A duty done in a loving spirit has been not only the end of an assignment but the beginning of an association that ripened into an affection and a devotion and a comradeship loaded with the sublimest joys of earth and heaven! The author can look back across the years to some indescribably blessed friendships. They were like the angels of God coming to bless a struggling human. They were the foretaste of heaven amid the ferocities of time. Most of them were unsought. Their occasion came in the performance of some pastoral or neighborly duty, a death call in a house of sorrow, an answer to a letter from an unknown person in the congregation, a friendly deed in a moment of personal need, a debate with an earnest but skeptical mind. The visit was made, the letter answered, the errand done, the argument followed through its wearying length, and that seemed to be all. There was kindness, but no expectation of anything more. But there was much more, much of all that makes our pilgrimage a voyage of discovery. The contact made, the door opened, the questions answered, the hungers fed on the Living Bread, and there followed such friendships as made an unknown poet write:

O, the comfort—the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person.
Having neither to weigh thoughts,
Nor measure words—but pouring them
All right out—just as they are!⁹

The dialogue with such an event and its aftermath has taught one man that "strangers" may actually prove to be "angels unawares" and that hospitality in the name of Christ may fill an empty house and heart, not only with exciting friends but with the Friend!

Ideas are events too. One of the most stirring devotional addresses I ever heard at a Retreat was given by a minister on the text quoted from Hebrews 13:2. His life had been an intellectual struggle of the most severe kind. Reared in a very conservative home, there came a time when the orthodoxies of his childhood no longer commanded his respect and loyalty. He was in the ministry and had to preach every Sunday, but what he had preached once with conviction became unreal and repulsive. He could not repeat the old phrases nor proclaim the "faith which was once delivered" to his spiritual ancestors. Anyone who has been through such an intellectual and theological revolution knows what a terrible experience it can be. While this was going on, ideas began to knock at the door of his mind. Strange ideas they were to him. More than once they were turned away. But at last a few were timidly received and cautiously bedded down for the night. Once inside, they proved to be delightful guests. They began to unfold to him truths which proved to be the way out of his dilemmas. So that day at the Retreat, we had a vivid portrayal and illustration of the fact that a strange idea, once welcomed, may be an emancipation from the bondage of inadequate ideas into the glorious freedom of the sons of God. When new ideas come, at least give them and yourself the advantage of a dialogue with them. Do not dismiss them arbitrarily. They may have hidden in their strangeness blessings undreamed.

THROUGH EVENTS TO GOD

Dialogue with events will be enhanced if we recognize that God is the accompaniment of *all* the events of our lives. That is not to say that God sends them all or that God is *in* them all as their hidden essence or control. It is to affirm the all-relatedness of God, and to say that whatever happens to us whether by our own actions or by the deeds of our fellow men or by the forces of society or by the mechanisms and organisms of nature, God is there even more truly than we ourselves. And if, when the dialogue begins,

we do not merely ask ourselves or the event what it means, but we also ask God what He wants it to mean to us, the illumination that comes will have greater dimensions and more penetrating impact upon our lives.

EVENTS AND REVELATION

One of the great changes that have come over the contemporary mind has to do with its concept of revelation. Once theologians conceived of revelation as the divine dictation of propositional truth directly to the minds of the writers of Scripture. Often the writers were regarded as little more than secretaries who wrote what God dictated. They were believed to be utterly and intelligently and comprehendingly responsive to the divine dictation. Their own outlook, their own style, their own culture had nothing to do with the document. The eternal God spoke, and they recorded. Any differences in style or diversities in contents arose, not from the writers or their situation, but from the direct will of God.

But latterly men came to conceive God as the God of history in a new sense. *Events* were the language He employed to convey His will. Not that God ordered events just as they occurred, but that He was in the events, making them the spokesmen of His mind and heart, the revealers of His intentions, His plans and purposes. "The mighty acts" occurring in the long history of Israel and the supreme act of God in the Incarnation, at Calvary, and in the Resurrection, these events, and not merely communicated ideas, are the divine revelation.

Events became a revelation, however, because some men entered into dialogue with them, prayerfully inquired their meaning, and had the help of the Spirit of God to discover their meaning. The same events were witnessed by others who saw no meaning in them at all, who met them only with anger and were driven by them into despair or skepticism. Secular historians, recounting many events in the history of Israel, see them as purely natural or human events. But men of spiritual sensitivity, whose faith was quickened by the Holy Spirit and whose dialogue with history was guided by the same Spirit, saw these events as the scene of God's activity. Some men of Jesus' day saw and heard Jesus. But they saw only a trouble-

maker and heard only what they accounted as blasphemy. But other men who saw and heard, worshiped Him as the Son of God and heard the words of eternal life; "you have the words of eternal life. . . ." ¹⁰

Because of sincere and serious and illumined dialogue with events, we have the Old Testament with its God-anointed personalities, its God-created insights, its God-hurled challenges, its God-bestowed comforts. We have also the New Testament with the supreme good news that "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself," ¹¹ and communicating to our death-bound lives the assurance of the "life that shall endless be." ¹²

This dialogue with the revealing events of yesterday should be a continuing thing in all of our lives. At the beginning of this decade, the *Christian Century* presented an illuminating series by distinguished theologians on "How My Mind Has Changed." One of the impressive features in this series was the witness which these scholars gave to the impact of history upon their minds, and their conviction that truth will most likely be found by those who carry on a continuing dialogue with history.

H. Richard Niebuhr wrote of the radically historical character of human existence: "I do not see that faith comes to me or to my fellowmen through any doctrines about what lies back of the historical event. It comes to me in history, not in doctrines about history." ¹³ In history, he finds himself confronted with three facts: human lostness, sinfulness, idolatrousness; trust as a miraculous gift; and that miracle wrought among us by and through Jesus Christ.

Will Herberg said: "The new direction of my thinking that has emerged in the past decade, I, myself, would define as a new and startling sense of *the all-importance of history* . . . the conviction . . . that nothing can be really understood about man and his enterprises unless it is understood historically." For him that means "one must take with the utmost seriousness the continuing conversation through the ages about the 'highest things' that the history of philosophy reveals to us." It means, too, that in this period of crisis, "the preservation of the historical stabilities and continuities against the incursion of the demonic, becomes the primary concern and responsibility." ¹⁴

Albert C. Outler said:

For a long time now I have been convinced that one of the hidden causes of our current confusion is the often unrecognized hiatus between the Christian present and the Christian past. . . . One constant and continuing project I can see in my distracted labors has been the effort to recouple the past and the present—and to persuade others that it must be done or at the very least attempted. . . . We cannot escape from our own church history. . . . We do not do so, even if we attempt a leap of faith directly from the present moment to the New Testament—seeking to hear God's word, so to speak, from out of time.¹⁵

These are significant words for us who are not scholars as well as for those who specialize on theology. The great and distressing tendency among us is to seek to hear God's word out of time. Here we are—and look who we are! There is God! Why let history come between us? Especially since much so-called history seems of dubious authenticity. The answer is a double one. First, God is in history. He alone did not make it as it is. But He did work within it. It cannot be understood apart from Him and our faith in Him. Second, man is in history, is a creature of history, and we cannot understand man apart from history. We ourselves at this moment are creatures in history. We are what we are because of that history. Everything we read and study and think and appraise is done by eyes and minds that are tintured by history. To ignore history is to foreclose against any adequate knowledge of the world, or humanity, or ourselves, or God.

It is by a living, thoughtful, patient, persistent dialogue with history, *with the events and peoples and experiences of yesterday, that we are fitted to carry on an adequate dialogue today.* That does not mean that we will try to make history repeat itself or even hope that it will. That does not mean that we are to become history-logged conservatives, furiously resisting change. It does mean a recognition that the past was not a total loss; that experience has something to say to speculation that the speculator needs to hear; that an absolute breach with yesterday must be able to give a good account of itself if it is to make sense; that learning from the centuries is wisdom for this century; that creative suggestions are most likely to come to the man who is steeped in the past without being suffocated by it. It also means that the Central Event in history, Jesus Christ, is the clue to the meaning of history as it was, is now, and ever shall be.

Forget that Event, and you forfeit tomorrow. Live with the Event, let it speak to you, ask it the questions that disturb you, keep a thoughtful dialogue going between it and yourself, and you will find in yourself not "the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind!"¹⁶

THE PERIL OF IDEOLOGY

Wherever the dialogue with history is seriously and intelligently pursued, the issues of the day are not so likely to be offered a doctrinaire solution. One is not so apt to become the prisoner of an ideology, for he has seen ideologies come and go. Ideas there must be, if there is to be anything of value anywhere. The sad fate of an idea is that it may become an ideology. And ideology is the idolatry of an idea. Like all idolatry, it becomes slavery to something less than the best. It commands devotion, but devotion to partial truths. It enlists fervor, but the fervor often becomes a fury that blinds one to the total situation. It begets a kind of stability, but it is the stability of one who is frozen in an opinion no longer valid. It may create a radical who goes off the deep end, or a conservative who never guesses that there is anything deeper than the shallows in which he is wading in perfect safety, but in which neither he nor his society can swim. It cannot provide wise leadership in a time of change.

We have seen what an ideology can do in Russia. The ideology of a classless society has permitted the rise of class distinctions more rigid and more dehumanizing than any classes that have arisen under democracy. The division between the praesidium and the peasant is as sharp and as pitiless as any that ever existed between czar and peasant. Workers Councils have less to say about conditions in industry than labor unions have here in capitalistic America. If in Russia there could be a dialogue between men and events, the events would shatter the illusions engendered by the Communist ideology. The Kremlin would have to recognize that, with all its denunciations of capitalism, there is now in Russia a partial restoration of capitalism. There would have to be a recognition that the so-called liberation of the proletariat has been in reality an enslavement of proletariat to doctrinaire programs and most of all to fear, with the loss of all those liberties which make life truly human—liberty of thought, of speech, of movement, of assemblage, of worship.

America began with ideas of equality. But in so many areas of society, equality has become an ideology, as divorced from reality as the classless ideology of Russia is from the reality of life there.

While Americans do obeisance in words to equality they still maintain and defend second class citizenship in which men and women are denied the right to vote. A real dialogue with events occurring at registration booths in the southern United States would at least deliver citizens from the blinding spell of the American ideology of equality and might help recapture the real meaning of the idea and give it effect in American political life.

Efficiency is a typical American ideology. The idea of efficiency has great value, no doubt, everywhere, in government, in industry, in education, in religion. But when it becomes an ideology, it needs scrutiny. Mass production has been characterized by great efficiency. Its achievements are cited in a kind of rhapsodical fervor. Figures are impressive. The world's admiration and envy confirm American pride and satisfaction. "Great is the goddess of America. Great is Efficiency!" But a little dialogue with the human events that accompany efficiency breaks the spell. "Which should be maximized, the production of the company or the satisfactions of the worker? What about the drudgery of the job? Is off-the-job leisure activity the only hope of the toiler? Does contentment grow with automation? Is not efficiency actually inefficient when it is not sufficient to assure the fullness of life in which alone lies the possibility of labor at its best?"¹⁷

Christianity represents for most of us the "big idea" in living. But, again, it so often becomes an ideology. The repetition of its creeds, the observance of its rituals, the celebration of its sacraments, the festivities attendant upon its holy days, compose a rhythm of adulation or a soothing syrup of content which relieves us of painful self-examination or probing scrutiny of the contents of our daily living. Some frank dialogue between ourselves and the events of our personal lives would quickly end our complacency and spur us to the reconstruction of our patterns of life, the regeneration of our inner attitudes and concerns, and the revival of those spiritual therapies which will make us more truly Christian. When sociological surveys reveal that there apparently is little connection between the number of churches and church members in a community and the "good life," it is time that the domain of the ideology

and its illusions be shattered by some searching dialogue with the week-by-week events.

EVENTS STILL REVELATION

God is still in events. He has not withdrawn from the world nor hidden himself in it so elusively that we cannot encounter Him. This is not an immanentism that easily becomes pantheism. God is above the world, independent of the world, not to be equated with the world. But God is *in* the world. It could not exist for one moment without Him. It cannot dismiss Him. Natural forces apparently go their way regardless of Him. Human wills defy Him at every turn. Yet "He rides on the tempest and walks on the sea." Man may use atomic energies for purposes which God does not approve. But while God grieves over every Hiroshima and over every "fall-out" that contaminates soil and sea and threatens the children of tomorrow, He is not frightened from the scene or palsied into inactivity. He is on the job, trying to talk to us, warn us, save us and generations to come from disaster. Will we enter into dialogue with Him or will we in our pride and fear heedlessly continue our ruinous policies and practices? Since the holocaust we unleashed upon Japanese cities without warning, the world is afraid of us. God is talking to us through that fear. Will we listen? The news of our treatment of Negroes has circulated around the world. That news negates much that we are now saying to the world in the forum of the United Nations. The newly created nations in Africa are wary of our intentions, for they are colored and our protestations of brotherhood are not convincing. We need them now in the world struggle with Communism, but they are not at all sure that they need us or can trust us. God is trying to say something to us through their suspicions and their aloofness. Will we enter into dialogue with Him, or will we have to hear as did His people of old, "My people doth not consider."¹⁸

This dialogue that seeks God in and through events should not be reserved for the times when the world is being shaken by portents of disaster. It should be a regular part of daily life.

We are interrupted on a frightfully busy day. Our tendency is to deplore the interrupter and to hurry him out of the house or the office at the earliest possible moment. "Hasn't he any sense at all?

Can't he see how hard-pressed I am? Who does he think he is anyhow, to come in unannounced? Does he assume that he is the only one who has troubles? What colossal egotism to take it for granted that his little aches matter very much to anybody but himself?" That is a human enough reaction and one we have little trouble in justifying. But suppose we lift our thoughts Godward instead; "God, is there anything you are trying to say to me by this interruption? Is there anything you want me to say to this man?" Suppose, while listening to the person before us, we also listen to God and let Him interpret this unwelcome event.

There are many witnesses who will testify that such a dialogue often brings surprising results. *Once*, we were used to lift a soul out of desperation and to change a whole life, something much more significant than the task with which we were busy when the "intruder" entered. *Once*, we learned by experience the truth, of the biblical exhortation, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." A new chapter in our own life began then and there. Deliverance not found before, not even sought intelligently, became our happy lot. *Once*, a truth came home to us which God had not been able to communicate in any other way, although since he is God he must have been trying for a long time! The usual prayers and the familiar contacts and the routine schedules had not opened a crack where God could get through. Then came the rudeness of an intrusion upon our privacy and the arrest of the attention, and God did the rest! The event was what some would call an accident, but we knew it was a challenge to dialogue, and out of the dialogue came deliverance!

Moses turned aside to see the burning bush; Elizabeth Barrett Browning turned to inquire at a common bush. One was halted by the unusual; the other, by the normal. It should not be merely the unusual that prompts inquiry. One discovers by-and-by that God can speak also through the normal and the incidental, the little mishap, the trifling annoyance, the fragile but unexpected joy; the smile of a passer-by; the pat on the shoulder on a chilly day; the remembrance of a distant friend; the memory of the woods where our delighted fancy took us on a summer day long ago; the picture on a screen that took us to a mountaintop where we en-

countered God; the keepsake from someone now in heaven; the fragrance of apple blossoms that recall a wonder-laden night in the country whither we had for a brief span escaped from the roar of the smelly city; the dried and faded petals of a once lovely flower between the leaves of a book that a beloved friend had sent across the country as a reminder of creative hours together.

So often have we heard from God through events, great and small, that it has become the habit, day after day, in the midst of routines and at every break in them, to enter into dialogue with the event, and by a lift of thought and a pause in activity, to inquire if God is saying anything by way of reminder or summons or insight or warning.

"In every thing give thanks"; "... in everything God works for good with those who love him."¹⁹ That is our biblical charter for a dialogue with every sort of event. A thankful mood in every situation, which looks up to God gratefully and expectantly; a confidence that in the worst as in the best God is at work and that our chief responsibility is to find out what He is doing and to co-operate with Him—that is the clue to redemptive dialogue.

Some of life is comedy, thank God. Sometimes it is rip-roaring comedy; sometimes it is just quiet and refreshing fun. God speaks through the laughter as well as through the tears of life if we will give Him a chance. We need not spoil the fun by forever looking for a lesson. Nothing could be more undivine than that. But we can hope that God is laughing with us. Our laughter will be all the merrier if we give God an opening to tell us why He is laughing too. Jesus did. He saw children playing in the market place—that is, some of them were. The rest were standing on the side lines, pouting. It was suggested that they all dance, but those "sour pussies" could not see any sense in hopping up and down. "All right," said the leader, "if you do not feel like dancing, let's play funeral: I'll be the corpse. You look as if you wished I were dead. So I will drop dead and you can bury me!" But even that did not move the pouters. The humor of the situation was not lost on Jesus. He remembered it for a long time. The event and the memory of it became to His alert mind a parable and an interpretation of His own baffling experience. John had asked people to join him in the austerities of religion and they had said to him, "You are crazy." Jesus

then came, enjoying life, but the people still stood aloof, saying, "Look! a drunkard and a glutton." It was disappointing, but it did not puzzle Jesus. He recalled what had happened on the marketplace playground. His dialogue with events and with God enabled Him to take in all the comedy He had witnessed, and to use it to interpret his own tragedy.

On a recent Sunday, a well-known Scottish preacher, now domiciled in America, was preaching a sermon to the children who sat in the front pews of the full church. He was launching into an effective homily on doorbells when a little hand went up. The preacher's perceptive eyes saw the hand. Interrupting his talk, he looked down at the young interlocutor and inquired, "Did you wish to say something?" Promptly the irreverent lad piped up, "I bumped my head!" It was funny, but at least one hearer, who had a lively sense of humor, saw in the event something of the problem the preacher and God have every Sunday morning. People go to church ostensibly to worship and to learn about God's other children. But, alas, they have bumped their own precious heads somewhere during the week, and nothing else matters. If the sermon is not about that, it is no sermon. They remind one of the Russian story of the man who was in Jerusalem on the day Christ was crucified. From a distance, he caught a glimpse of Calvary. But for him in the years afterward, his memory was monopolized by the fact that on that day he, himself, had a toothache!

God cannot only refresh us with laughter; He can also remind us of what we are likely to forget and prepare us for what is to come, if we live through events, all events, with Him.

Tragedy should also be included in our dialogue. Tragic events often seem utterly meaningless. They are often wrapped in impenetrable mystery. Sometimes they strike us dumb; sometimes they invite bitterness. Always they are a challenge to faith. But if we can maintain a dialogic relation to them; if we can gather our shattered wits together and ask "why?"; if we can face dark mystery without losing heart and wait in trusting silence for the mystery to speak, or for God to speak through the mystery; if we can look through our tears to the God behind tragedy to point us to issues beyond tragedy; if we can be as honest and as humble with the whole event as we are in dialogue with a friend; if we can be as

patient as we are, when our ignorance is in conversation with an expert who is trying to answer our questions, but finds it very difficult to make what is commonplace with him intelligible to our groping mind—then in the long run, meanings will appear, and we, who were tempted to bitterness, shall find ourselves numbered among the blest.

It is not through reasoning alone that we shall arrive. It is not in fighting back that we shall emerge victors in the strife. It is not in stoic freezing-up or in cynical letting-down that we shall finally be able to continue the pilgrimage homeward again. It is by dialogue with the God who is in every event, a dialogue which does not force the issue or arrogantly demand explanations or sneer at providence, but that waits upon God, asking His help in humble expectancy, taking His answers as they come and staying by until questions and answers create a faith by which we may live the rest of our journey.

Much has been written about tragedy, but never enough. The sorrows of mankind take on new forms in every age and seem to thrust upon men new reasons for despair. Every man's victory has significance for all other men. It is essential that everyone who has found some light shall share it with his fellows. Here is one story that may help you.

The darkest tragedy is not one that involves the loss of things, the theft of position, the estrangement or death of the beloved. Any of these may be terrible enough, but they are not tragic in the classical sense. Real tragedy arrives in the deprivation of all hope. "I weep," said Solon, "precisely because it avails nothing." Situations are truly tragic when the familiar certainties offer no realistic and satisfying interpretation. Remember Hester Prynne, in Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, when Arthur Dimmesdale, in dying, sees a ray of light. He asks her, "Is not this better than we dreamed of in the forest?" Her reply was, "I know not. I know not." Tragedy is just not knowing where once one knew or at least had faith that knowledge was possible. The old assurances no longer assure. The old comforts no longer heal. The old hopes seem utter illusion. The old confidence that there is an essential goodness at the heart of things vanishes into thin air. The stark realities shatter the once sure reasonings. The rock on which one had planted one's

feet becomes sinking sand. The friendly and reliable compass goes berserk. One's mental dizziness makes the stars overhead a vast confusion and the ground beneath one's feet a whirling destruction. One's spiritual dismay for the moment leaves one exposed to utter despair. One is left voiceless, a degenerating victim of enshrouding darkness and irretrievable gloom. It is zero hour, the advent of nothingness, the triumph of nonbeing, the termination of all value.

In such an hour, men have said various things: "Curse God, and die." "I had it coming to me." "My head is bloody, but unbowed." The man of whom I write could do neither. How could he curse the God whose love, unveiled on Calvary, had awakened such love for himself? In the darkest moments after tragedy broke, stunned, bewildered, robbed of all hope, nevertheless his soul cried, "O God, no matter what happens to me, Thy will be done, Thy kingdom come." He never loved God more, nor did he ever more truly consent to whatever was necessary for the triumph of Christ. He was ready for Christ's sake to be accursed by men, but never could he curse his Savior.

Nor could he honestly say that he had it coming to him. Well enough did he know that he deserved none of God's tender mercies. Fully aware was he of the necessity of the daily prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." He stood with the Publican and not with the Pharisee when he went up to the Temple or into the closet to pray. He also arrayed himself with Jesus who said, "None is good, save one, that is God," and not with the man who unctuously took to himself the maxim "the worst happens to the best." He had not asked God to account for the sorrows and sicknesses and deprivations and disappointments that had attended his way through the years. But he was conscious of good intentions. If he were on the wrong course, he had nevertheless, sought in prayer and through human counsel the right course, and had many evidences that the search was not in vain. He had applied to his decisions the usual tests of results in the life of others as well as in his own. God had been very real to him, and divine blessings seemed to rest upon his life and labors. Until tragedy struck, like lightning from a clear sky, life had never seemed so fair or so promising. Even after the blow, as he critically reviewed decisions and deeds and realized where mistakes had been

made, he still had to say that the effect was out of all proportion to the cause.

He came from fighting ancestry. In his veins was the blood of soldiers in three wars, crusaders against social evils, pioneers in dusty caravans moving westward across the desert or breaking paths of thought where highways never ran, who took the worst life could impose with heads up and hearts undismayed. But he wanted something more than sheer defiance of danger or rebellion against fate.

In one sense, he knew whereof Albert Camus wrote in the presence of the nihilism and despair of many of his contemporaries: "In the midst of winter, I finally learned that there was in me an invincible summer."²⁰ The icy blasts that blew about him and surrounded him with a frozen landscape, in which not one fragrant flower of hope budded, could not eliminate the inner warmth that kept radiating and making itself felt in the strangest moments, and that grew its own little garden in the stillness of the inner shrine. But even that, welcome as it was, was not enough. He needed to know what lay behind it all and what might be the outcome of it all. The inner summer was a boon, but what about the outer winter. Did it portend an ultimate ice age? Was there some inexplicable fault at the heart of things which would issue in universal tragedy? His own tragedy was nothing if at the end there would be triumph for the good and the true and the beautiful. Was there to be?

In lieu of an answer, he resolved to carry on a dialogue with the tragic events that had all but overwhelmed him. He did it honestly, humbly, patiently, teachably, sensitively, with plenty of self-criticism and genuine hospitality to the criticisms of others. He waited before God and listened for His answers. He created conditions for the reception of those answers. He pondered ancient wisdom and was open to the latest insights that came. He kept his mind saturated with the Word. He learned a new stillness in the presence of tragedy. He remained loyal to disloyal friend and never-loving accuser. He lived sympathetically with the tragedies of millions. While saying "no" to the raucous voices of skepticism and the dark hints of prophets of doom, he maintained a constant "yes" in his heart to God.

What happened? Of course, a period of agony. But his agony was accompanied by the agony of God. He gradually became aware of

that—and how the awareness helped! He knew he was not alone with his grief. Day after day passed with seemingly little change. But also here and there came gleams of hope. He was given insight into his errors. He was shown some things that he could do. He was taught a new and deeper love for others. New goals were lifted before him. There came a real purgation of self-will. He began to realize that it is God's approval and not man's that is really important. As he waited in penitence and humility, he became blessedly conscious of God's forgiveness and approval. The deprivation of the faith of others for a time had corroded his own faith in himself, but one day he was assured that God had faith in him—a thrill he will never forget. He finally became conscious that he still had all that is necessary for great living—the love of God, love for all mankind, opportunities for humble service, the chance to grow into the likeness of Christ, the privilege of living every day in the company of God and for the ends which God makes clear every day, the fellowship of those who belong to the "beloved community of the forgiven and the forgiving."

Other wonders followed. While the losses were great, the gains were greater. His very disengagement from the fretting consideration of what others might think gave him a new freedom. Concentration upon the divine goals, newly given, increased his effectiveness. He had some happy surprises in friendships. The friends lost made even more precious those who remained, and they who remained acquired a new dimension just because of their unwavering trust and fidelity. He discovered that God had not only been speaking to him, but had been at work outside. New doors were opened. New friends came. Old friends saw things in a new light. Genuine miracles took place in his relationships. Christ walked with him in closer, dearer company. The arms of the Crucified were thrown about him. The nail-pierced hands were laid upon his head in healing. The feet of the Crucified journeyed with him over the roughest roads. The love of the Crucified never let him go, but held him in a spell that has not been broken.

Without dialogue, this could never have happened.

EIGHT

The Dialogue with the Bible—I

It is no news that the Bible is the last thing with which many of our contemporaries expect to hold fruitful dialogue.

One person declared that the death of Queen Victoria marked the time "when we decided that the Bible is a bore." A businessman confessed recently and very sadly that he had tried to read it, but got nothing out of it. It is in most of the homes of church people, but it would be an exaggeration to say that all of them are at home with it. It is one thing to own a Bible; quite another thing to possess it.

Even many of those who profess some use of the Bible really only abuse it. A lawyer told me that whenever he was in perplexity, he opened the Bible at random three times and read the first verse on which his eyes lighted. Then he let himself be guided by the contents of those passages. I asked him if there was ever a contradiction between the passages so randomly selected. He said, "Yes; then I take the best two out of three. The majority rules." To most of us that practice makes the Bible ridiculous. It is an assumption that the Bible is a book of random wisdom, to be approached intermittently and casually in the spirit in which one flips a coin. It is no more sensible than the practice of the students in a fraternity house who found themselves tempted to go to a movie rather than to stay by their books. They whirled a coin. If it came up heads they spent the evening in study; if tails, they went to the theater! The Bible no more than a book on science will not have much chance under such conditions.

We, ministers, have much to answer for in this matter. Our bald literalism has sometimes made the Bible a grotesque book. We have taken specific instructions for local situations and stretched them into universal rules. We have used it as an anthology of religious quotations and ignored its organic character. We have lifted texts out of context and made them pretexts for the justification of our own peevishness or our personal philosophy. One of our number has claimed the Bible as an authority on physics and astronomy. The forced interpretations he employed to prove his labored arguments not only made him suspect of intellectual honesty but imposed upon the book a role which it is not fitted to play.

Nevertheless, in spite of all the abuse it has suffered and all the neglect accorded it, it is still the best seller. It has outcirculated every other book every year since printing began. More than sixty thousand books have been written about it. Literally billions of speeches have been made about it, thirteen million every year according to reasonable estimates.¹ Certainly thousands of authors would not take the energy and thought and pains involved in writing to write about a book that is merely a bore or a puzzle. Nor would millions of speeches be prepared and listened to about a book that has no relevance to life and wields no inner authority over life. It would have been forgotten long ago if it were only what some think it is, a medley of the irrational and the irrelevant, on which men ought not waste time trying to understand.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said of it, "Pitch it out of the window and it bounces back again."² A man of our own time added; "It cannot be said of our generation that it reads the Bible alone. Yet it can be said that it cannot leave the Bible alone."³ Here is a phenomenon of arresting import—a book that has been tossed out the window again and again, and yet keeps coming back; a book millions have tried to forget, and yet cannot forsake; a book which no secular or religious authority has power to compel anyone to read, and yet a book to whose pages millions keep returning in spite of its difficulties and the demands it makes upon those who do read it!

Why? The only possible answer is that the Bible has in it that which lays hold upon something very deep within us. "Deep calleth unto deep." Misunderstood, it nevertheless creates a desire to understand. Misinterpreted, it compels us to return for a better interpreta-

tion. Mocked by cynics and skeptics, it succeeds in saying to the human heart, "Here is inescapable reality." Made ridiculous and offensive often by its representatives, there remains an inner glory which they cannot completely obscure or betray, and that glory stirs the imagination and invites reverence. Here it is, abused, discredited, denied, and even damned by its exponents and critics. Yet it lives and lures both the reprobate and the religious, *hoi polloi* and the intelligentsia. It must have something which men have not given it and which men cannot take away.

Lawrence E. Nelson calls it "our roving Bible." It does rove, through centuries and civilizations, clans and creeds, castles and slums, colleges and gambling dens, Statehouses and almshouses, garrets of philosophy and laboratories of science, cathedrals and camp meetings, battlefields and country barns, theaters and convents, prayer meetings and prison cells, hospitals and concentration camps, art galleries and publishing houses, sanctuaries and cemeteries. And wherever it goes, it makes a difference!

APPROACHES TO THE BIBLE

It will always make a difference, a crucial difference when rightly approached. Many approaches are valid. The historian may come to it equipped with the criteria of authentic history, and he has a perfect right to do that. He is being true to his vocation when he seeks to discover whether biblical records enshrine history or legend or myth. The physicist may rightly ask whether the miracles recorded, from the passage of the waters of the Red Sea to the story of Christ walking upon the waters of the Sea of Galilee, are possible from the viewpoint of science. The anthropologist may want to discuss the variance between the biblical account of creation and his theory of the origins of the race. The astronomer will inevitably compare the biblical picture of the earth and heavens with that presented by the dizzy discoveries of telescope and radioscope. The orientalist will ask whether linguistic styles confirm or question the traditional authorship of the various books. The theologian will want to inquire whether the concept of God in the Old Testament harmonizes with that in the New Testament.

He is very foolish who would deny any of these persons the right and privilege of doing exactly what they are doing. Their

findings, when authenticated, should be welcome. But faith does not wait upon the answers to all the questions they ask. Nor can faith live by mere denials of the answers they claim to have found. William Jennings Bryan, in his conduct of the Scopes trial in Tennessee, tried to argue with facts. That is deadly both for intellectual integrity and religious faith. Facts often need interpretation. But they are invincible against argument, even though the eloquence of a Bryan be thrown into the arena against them.

So we welcome all the facts which scientist and historian can establish with reference to the Bible. But it must be recognized that both scientist and historian may discover facts about the Bible record and miss entirely the regenerative meanings of the Bible for their own lives. It should also be understood clearly, by those of us who are not expert in science and in history, that the Bible can be the Book of Life for us, if we come to it in the proper spirit and with effective methods.

The author would crave the privilege of humble witness at this point. He grew up in a Christian home. He was taught the then prevailing view of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. It was the final authority on every subject mentioned. He never questioned that the earth was created in six days; that man's troubles began when he listened to a talking serpent and ate the fruit of the forbidden tree; that the whole earth was once flooded to a height of six miles; that the sun stood still so that Joshua could finish off his enemies in victorious battle; that God ordered the pitiless slaughter of the Amalekites, men, women and children; that the whale swallowed Jonah; that God did harden men's hearts and then did punish them for the hardness which He himself had caused.

Then came contact with modern science and historical research. At first, he was frightened and angry. He tried to join battle with both science and history, but it was a losing battle. The evidence was too strong against his arguments. Then he fell into panic. If science and history were right, what would become of his God and his faith in Christ and his hope of eternal life? Where went his certainties? He was in despair. He could not refuse the cogency of the criticisms offered by science and history. But how could he endure the prospects of a life shorn of faith and hope? By the mercy of God, he learned that he did not have to do either. Science

and history could speak on matters within their competence. The Bible could speak on matters beyond the scope of science and beyond the reach of the humanistic interpretation of history. It was the greatest hour of his life when that became clear.

Now the Bible is a more precious life-making book than it ever was in the days when no questions had been raised. For him, the Bible is no longer a problem but the answer. It is not a book for an outmoded yesterday, but the book for today and tomorrow. It does not ask for ridiculous exegetical acrobatics, but for moral and spiritual integrity and response. It does not impose an impossible strain upon intelligence, but offers insight and illumination. It does not suggest that any of us hide away from any truth in any realms of life, for it itself is the record of one long, heroic pursuit of truth, and at last unveils Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. It does not seek the defense of the indefensible or the explanation of the unexplainables, or the reconciliation of the irreconcilables. It does not need from the reader any lame justification of the lies of Abraham, the conscienceless cunning of Jacob, the cruelties of Joshua, the vengeful psalms, the bloody pageant of Revelation, the historical inaccuracies and contradictions and unfulfilled expectations of the end of the world. It brings us face to face with Jesus whom none can impeach and with His sacrifice, which every mortal needs, and with His love, which is the hope of all mankind.

THE APPROACH THROUGH DIALOGUE

It is in the light of this experience, which the author has shared with many others, that he now suggests the method of dialogue in approach to the Bible. This chapter is not an attempt to reconcile science and religion. Nor is it a final exposition of the relationship between secular and sacred history. It is rather a suggestion of, and a witness to, the method of dialogue in the devotional approach to the Book of books.

To participate in dialogue means that one both speaks and is spoken to; one asks questions and receives answers; one permits himself to be questioned and is under obligation to give answers; there is discussion that continues until positions are made clear and each party accepts or rejects what the other has said, or perhaps keeps it in mind for further consideration.

Too frequently none of this takes place with reference to the Bible. We read it and ask no questions; it seems to some blasphemous to question anything found therein. Or we read it and find so many questions arising, especially about facts, that we turn aside to reading that makes sense. Or we thrust aside the inevitable question and go on to something in it that we can accept. Dwight L. Moody was once accosted by a person who complained that there were so many things in the Bible one could not understand. His answer was to refer the questioner to the ass who had had put before him some hay in which unfortunately there were some thistles. The ass passed up the thistles and ate the hay. The evident inference was that if one had a little "horse sense," one would read selectively and not worry one's poor head about the stories and teachings which were prickly with intellectual difficulty. "Let thistles alone and go after the hay." One can get much from the book by that strategy. But one will also miss the most significant truths that are there for his enlightenment.

Where we fail most of all is in not letting the Bible take the initiative and question us. Any dialogue in which we insist that the questions asked must originate with us is miserably poor dialogue. The other fellow will have questions which we either have not enough sense to ask or from which we have shied away because they put us on the spot, "give us furiously to think," embarrass our way of life, challenge our conclusions.

THE INTELLIGENT QUESTIONS

It is in asking the right questions of the Bible, in permitting the most searching questions to be asked of us by the Bible, in staying by until our questions are answered, in being absolutely honest in our answers, that the dialogue with the Bible becomes a life-changing, life-making experience.

There are two questions the intelligent reader must always ask as he reads. First, is the event described a fact? Second, what does the fact mean for his own life and the life of his fellow men?

The first question has to do with the historical accuracy and validity of the account of any event. Here the modern reader encounters real difficulty. The world of the Bible is not the world of modern astronomy, physics, anthropology, psychology, scientific

law. The men whose religious experiences are therein described were men who believed in a flat earth surmounted by the inverted bowl of the firmament and sandwiched between heaven above and the world below. For them, angels and demons were existent and active in nature and human life. They knew nothing of the rotation of the earth and, therefore, heaven was always "up." They were ignorant of the natural forces governed by laws with which science has made us all familiar; therefore, any unusual event was for them a miracle, the intervention of God. They thought of God as capable of emotions quite like those which rule our lives; therefore, God's interventions were often described as acts of anger and caprice and revenge.

Inevitably, history written by men with such conceptions will present difficulties to the modern reader. He must ask again and again, "Is this a fact? Did it ever happen as here described?" There is nothing irreverent about such questions. In fact, they reveal a greater reverence than the supine acceptance of everything written or the timid avoidance of decision as to truth or error. He who really reveres God must be concerned that God be not maligned or misrepresented by the ascription to Him of anything that is unreal or offensive to the conscience created for us by Jesus Christ himself. One simply cannot believe that there ever was a flood sufficient to cover Mount Everest, which would have to be the case if the whole earth were submerged as the story asserts. Nor can one believe that a serpent ever talked in Eden, or that Elijah was carried to heaven in a visible chariot and on his way up dropped his mantle on Elisha, to mention only a few of the obvious unbelievables. Even more incredible is the ascription to God of the anger and vengeance and cruelty often recorded in the Old Testament.

If, in the light of our best knowledge of history or our deepest convictions about the nature of things and men and God, it seems unlikely that any particular incident did happen as described, then one must ask if, nevertheless, there was some objective historical event which gave rise to the story. Often the answer must be "yes."

The most conspicuous and consequential illustration is in the stories of the Resurrection. No one has ever been able to piece together the Gospel accounts in a consistent whole. Taken by themselves, without any effort to reconcile them to each other, they still

strain the faith of many. Rudolf Bultmann, German theologian and scholar, refuses to accept the Resurrection stories as reliable accounts of an objective event. He says they are mythical in character.

John Macquarrie, Scottish theologian and scholar, challenges Bultmann: "He does not take the trouble to examine what evidence could be adduced to show that the Resurrection was an objective-historical event." Macquarrie's own conclusion is that "the Easter stories together with St. Paul's appeal make it undeniable that Christ appeared to his disciples after his death."⁴

It is very important that we shall not hastily conclude in our dialogue with the Bible that its stories, however difficult they seem, do not have objective realities behind them.

The third question we should ask in our dialogue with the Bible is: "What meaning does this passage have for my life and the life of my fellows?" It may be an account of an event, real or supposed; it may be an explanation of the event. It may be an ascription to God of some command, which sounds to our ears more like a human opinion. Whichever it is, it will still have meaning, and that meaning will be communicated, if we will patiently wait, with expectancy and faith.

FAITH DIALOGUE

Here we need to understand what we mean by faith dialogue. In other areas, we engage in research dialogue; we are asking what are the facts here. Or we engage in critical dialogue; we are examining someone's interpretation of facts. Faith dialogue is something different. It, too, wants facts. It, too, takes under consideration someone's interpretation of facts. But it has an added element. It asks if, beyond facticity and interpretation, there may not be some meaning which is embedded in the total story and which symbolizes or suggests ageless truth for our human life. Its justification is that in the Bible we are confronted with a collection of books which have grown out of attempts to reveal God's action in history and which have demonstrated their moral power and spiritual insight. It is because of what the generations of men have found in the Bible and their witness to its illuminating power, and especially because it culminates in the Central Event in history, in Jesus Christ who paid tribute to the history which preceded Him, that we dare

believe that if we take it into faith dialogue it will speak to our needs, even through picture and proverb and psalm and parable and prophecy and legend.

The Eden story, for example, may be read, not merely as an archaic effort to explain the origin of evil, but as a clue to our own present miseries. We, too, have disobeyed. We, too, have tried to be our own deity. We, too, took pleasure where it pleased us, and passed on. So we, too, lost our paradise, and a flaming sword of judgment shuts us away from our dreams and ambitions for the rest of our days.

The story of Abraham's attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac seems, on the face of it, to involve God in a very dubious scheme which might have resulted fatally for the lad if a substitute lamb had not been available in the nick of time. Actually, it has become for many through the years a symbol of the fact that God often tests us by asking for the sacrifice of what we most love and, when we meet the test, He gives us back the beloved, more beloved than ever.

The story of Elijah's contest with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel and his victory when God sent fire to consume the offering on the altar becomes for a moment a little epic of faith. It is a stirring scene—one prophet of Jehovah against four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, one man's simple prayer against the ravings and implorings and bloodletting appeals of a half thousand favorites of Queen Jezebel. But the epic nature of the scene vanishes when Elijah ends the drama with the slaughter of every one of his opponents. Has that any meaning for us? Yes. To those who have entered into faith dialogue with it, there comes encouragement. It says that entrenched evil should be challenged even when we are a minority of only one; that God has resources beyond the usual to meet the unusual situation; that those resources come in answer to daring faith and simple prayer! But it warns us that there is always danger that victory may turn our heads and harden our hearts, and so divine deliverance may be taken to be not only vindication of our selves but warrant for vindictiveness against our opponents.

The story of the Tower of Babel is an ancient account of how there came into existence the many languages which make communication difficult between peoples from different areas. As such, it is ridiculous. But when it is made the subject of faith dialogue be-

tween us and the Scripture, it becomes an unforgettable reminder of what happens between men when in their pride they try to climb to the place which only God can occupy. They not only do not reach God, they find themselves out of reach of each other. Vaulting ambition is the great enemy of community. No one so hopelessly loses soul-satisfying contact with his fellows as the arrant egoist. And a community of egoists becomes a house divided against itself; it cannot stand!

These are simple random illustrations of what can happen when a true faith dialogue with the Bible continues. That which cannot be credited as factual statement of history long gone does become the occasion of insights valid for contemporary life. We cannot be exactly sure of what actually happened in the dim past. But we can become participants in happenings in the immediate present whose quality and significance are possible because we have been illuminated by stories from yesterday. It is always permissible to ask of any similar tales, "Is it possible that the events so described could have happened?" It is not only permissible but imperative that we should ask, "Have these stories something to say to my present potential?" We are, as Heidegger avers, "concerned with man in his authentic possibilities, when he has risen above the level of every day existence to something great and heroic."¹⁶ Faith dialogue with many troublesome chapters in the Bible will unveil those possibilities and help us to rise to something great and heroic.

FAITH DIALOGUE WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we come to the crucial events described in the New Testament, the Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection, this dialogue becomes even more inescapable if we are to understand what they have meant to the church and what they may mean to us. There can be little doubt that Jesus died on a Cross. Nor can there be legitimate doubt, as we shall see, that Jesus appeared to his disciples after the Crucifixion. The Incarnation seems a necessary corollary to the other two decisive events. Only of a person of whom it can be truly said that God was uniquely in Him, "reconciling the world unto himself," could a Resurrection following Crucifixion be a historic fact. Others have died as martyrs to the faith. Their glorious triumph in death has been convincing evi-

dence of the operation of divine grace in human life. But none who has so died has triumphed *over* death and appeared to their friends as did Jesus. Whatever reality there may be in the communications from the dead which the Society for Psychic Research reports, those communications are not in the same category as the Resurrection chronicles of Jesus. They are "messages" from the spirit world reported through "mediums," not direct person-to-person communion of such character as made men say, "It is the Lord."

Confronted by these central facts, dialogue is so much the more imperative. Even Bultmann, who does not assent to the factual character of two of these "saving events," still finds meaning in them. For him, the Cross, whose historicity he admits, is the essence of the Christian gospel—the radical surrender of self-sufficiency on the part of the Christian, which is at the same time surrender to God. To believe in the Cross is "to accept Christ's Cross as one's own, to be crucified with Christ."⁶ For him, the meaning of the Resurrection, is not that of a historical event but rather as a historical symbol of the offer of new life through Christ. For him, the meaning of the Incarnation is likewise a historical symbol indicating that the person and work of Christ did not originate from within the world but with God. Certainly all this is valuable. If one's dialogue with the Bible leads him to a recognition of the folly of self-sufficiency and the wisdom of surrender to God, a great step forward in his spiritual development has been made. And if he is brought to believe that the offer of new life for him has come from God and has been actually realized in one human experience, then he will live with a hope and a confidence that cannot come to one who sees life only as a struggle against terrible odds which ends finally in the defeat of death.

But for those of us whose dialogue brings us to the conclusion that Incarnation and Resurrection as well as the Crucifixion are historical facts, however great their mystery, the dialogue is richer and more continuously revolutionary and redemptive.

The Incarnation as fact and not merely a hopeful symbol gives an authenticity to all that Jesus said and did and was, which crowns Him as final authority over our lives. We are not living by hopeful conjectures but by ineradicable conviction. It is a conviction that penetrates into every area of our lives. We are confronted not

merely with a general impression that in the New Testament we are face to face with a movement and a mission that originated with God. We are arrested and cross-examined and chastened and challenged by the specific utterances and concrete deeds of One in whom God dwelt. That does not mean an assumption that every incident recorded about Jesus is a detailed, historical fact. But it does mean that in the portrait of Jesus which emerges from the Gospels, we are confronted with facts about Jesus, and therefore about God, which have revolutionary relevance for our daily lives. As the dialogue between ourselves and those facts continues, we experience a constant alteration of perspectives, a ceaseless purgation of emotions, a day-by-day revision of conduct. When Winifred Kirkland was asked the secret of her winsome life, she replied, "I do practice lifting my life to the level of the thoughts that come to me after reading the New Testament."⁷ We are not merely asked to renounce our self-sufficiency, but are made aware of the disguises beneath which self-sufficiency is hidden and of the many manifestations of it which need correction. We are not told merely that God offers new life, but are given illustration of the nature of that new life and how it operates in the midst of the common round.

For us, the Incarnation in its specific manifestations in history is assurance of the kinship between God and us. If the Incarnation is not merely a symbol that God took the initiative in saving us, but is a living, breathing sample of what God actually is, then human nature and the divine nature cannot be as alien to each other as some theologians would have us believe. And by actual dwelling in one of our race, God has also given us a comprehensible picture of what man may become when dedicated to God.

This does not mean the humanization of God. It does not mean the deification of man. God is God and not man. God in His infinity is beyond the comprehension of our finiteness. Man is man and not God. There is nothing of the assumption epitomized in a missionary's description of Mormon doctrine: "As you are now, so God once was; as God is now, so you will be." It does not reduce God to our stature nor amplify man into "a speaking likeness" to God.

But it does affirm that since God could dwell in man once, He

can and will again. This is a repeatable miracle. It does give concrete meaning to the Pauline exhortation to "put on Christ." It does make thrilling the Pauline dream for his people, "my little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!"⁸ It does create a certain and wonderful at-homeness in our relations with God, without in any way diminishing the awe which possesses us when we take the sacred name upon our lips. It does not induce any "pat-on-the-back" familiarity. That would be intolerable. Some years ago, so it is reported, the Bishop of London came to America on an official visit. On his departure he was accompanied to his ship by a committee of clergy and laity. As he mounted the gangplank, one of the laymen gave him a resounding slap on the back, saying, "Well, Bish, it was wonderful to have you with us."

We have heard prayers offered in much the same spirit. They were not an echo of the truth of the Incarnation; they were rather a distortion of it. There is in the Incarnation, as a historical fact, that which unites in itself the paradox of nearness and distance, of immanence and transcendence; "the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King." The ageless appeal of Christmas does not in any sense diminish the equally ageless adoration of "the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity." We do not turn from a discussion of the Incarnation to "shake hands with the Almighty," but we do feel a greater assurance in committing our lives into His hands. History will bear witness that these are the recurring benedictions that arise out of a faith dialogue with the fact of Incarnation.

FAITH DIALOGUE WITH THE CROSS

Not less is it true in such a relationship with the Cross. If we consider it not merely as an illustration of the duty of self-sacrifice, but as the immeasurable sacrifice which God made for us and continues to make, the Cross gains a dimension in our lives that is incomparable. It is true that it has made its unequaled impact upon millions. Futile attempts have been made to explain just *how* it was *God's* sacrifice and *why* it had to be at that particular time and in that gruesome fashion. None of them has ever been more than a hint of the reality. None of them has ever commanded the assent of more than a section of Christ's disciples or for more than a fraction

of the Christian centuries. But impressions have outrun and outlasted explanations. Transformations by the Cross have outlived theologies of the Cross. The theory that Christ died as a substitute victim for our sins is a poor substitute for the direct assurance that comes to the penitent sinner from the dying Christ. The atonement as described by theologians does not compare with the at-one-ment which takes place through the love of the Crucified Jesus.

This is no derogation of the function of theology. Nor is it disrespect for the theologians whose musings have helped us to be more articulate about our faith. It is, however, an insistence that a continuing dialogue between the Cross and the soul is in itself one of the most effective determiners of destiny. A beloved and brilliant friend of mine spent a sabbatic year in Germany. There he encountered a theologian of incisive mind. One day the two were talking about the matter which you and I are considering here. The German was much interested in my friend's experience with Christ. It had an assurance and a joy which he had not found. He asked my friend bluntly, "Tell me, exactly what does the death of Christ on the Cross mean to you?" My friend said that he thought for a moment, and then recited that old hymn "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." He said he did it with some hesitancy, for there are few hymns where the imagery is so stark and startling. But the very realism of the words confronted the theologian, not with a theory so much as with the Cross itself and the One who hung there. Something happened in the soul of that German thinker that day which would never have happened in a theological argument or in an attempt to capture the meaning of the Cross in abstract concepts. The memory of that event was one of the most precious which my friend brought back from his year abroad.

Many of us can testify to the deliverances which have come into our lives by our continuing dialogue with the Crucifixion. If we are ever tempted to complacency, a return to the Cross shatters whatever self-ease has wormed its miserable way into our souls. If despair ever perches on our window sill, we have only to creep in imagination near to that scene on Calvary and listen to Christ's words to the robber beside Him, "Today you will be with me in Paradise," and, lo, despair vanishes.

One man remembers gratefully the day when his world tumbled in. As he surveyed the ghastly ruins, the smoldering embers of hope, the gray debris of shattered dreams, his tear-filled eyes could see not one ray of light. If you have ever witnessed a total eclipse of the sun, you will remember that awesome moment when the vast, irresistible shadow came sweeping across the landscape and enveloped fields and trees and homes and self. You were not much disturbed by it for you knew that in a moment, as swiftly as it came, the shadow would be gone and the sun would take over from the darkness, the birds would sing again, your own heart would rejoice in the returning artistry of the light. Just as swiftly came to this man the sudden eclipse of everything that made life glorious, but with it no such expectation as accompanies the momentary darkness of the curtaining of the sun.

One moment everything; the next, nothing! One moment doxology; the next, a dirge. One moment the voice of friends; the next, sickening silence. One moment a dais; the next, a ditch. One moment roses; the next, thorns and briers. One moment pilgrimage; the next, paralysis! Where could one turn in such a situation? Happily, with scarcely the lapse of a minute, this man turned where he had always turned in the dialogue of life, to the Cross. Blessed be the habit! As he stood at the foot of the Cross, looking upward to the thorn-crowned head and the face of God shining through the love-lit eyes, there came the reaffirmation of the experience of Charles Wesley:

Jesus, my All-in-All Thou art:

My rest in toil, my ease in pain,

The healing of my broken heart,

In war my peace, in loss my gain,

My smile beneath the tyrant's frown:

In shame my glory and my crown.

NINE

The Dialogue with the Bible—II

It is with the Resurrection story that many of our contemporaries find it most difficult to carry on a dialogue. It seems to them like trying to enter into dialogue with something that never took place, with a fantasy, with a superstition, with a zero. Nor is it to be wondered, when one reads the hair-splitting, logic-chopping statements that emanate from some theological closets, as serious and intelligent men of our day write about the events following the Crucifixion.

This chapter is not an attempt to offer a substitute for the historical research and the theological speculation which inevitably must be a part of any effort to come to terms with the biblical faith. Its purpose is rather to suggest ways by which we non-theologians may enter into a creative dialogue with the Resurrection.

The fact of the event is assumed. Not the confusing details. Not the ingenious explanations of how or where or what, which tangle with our conceptions of physical law and our notions of plausibility. But just the fact that Christ did appear to His disciples after His death.

One of the most certain results of a dialogue with that fact is the accentuation of the possibility of new life. It was so in the beginning. Remember the quickening heartbeat of Paul as he proclaimed his confidence to his fellow Christians: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, . . . he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies

also through his Spirit which dwells in you.”¹ It was the contemplation of the fact that Jesus had been raised, that raised in Paul the expectation of new life for those who were dead in trespasses and sins. His own new life had begun at the time when he encountered the living Jesus on the Damascus Road. He thought he was pursuing and persecuting fellow Jews who had turned Christian; he discovered that he himself was being pursued by the Jesus whom he assumed to be dead, and that his persecuting frenzy was assailing not merely his countrymen but a living Jesus. He numbered himself among those who had seen the risen Lord—“last of all, . . . he appeared also to me.” So central a place did the actual Resurrection occupy in Paul’s faith and experience and preaching that he said, “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, . . . If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. . . . But in fact Christ has been raised. . . .”²

Certainly there can be no doubt that the dialogue between Paul and the fact of Resurrection was the dynamic of his thrilling ministry. It is the contention of some in our day that the order of events is, first, a new life through Christ, then, a faith in the Resurrection. That seems most doubtful. If anyone receives new life through Christ, it must be by reason of contact with Christ. That contact is probably through preaching or reading or perhaps the witness of someone who has himself encountered Christ. But the Christ thus met is not just a good man of yesterday, a winsome teacher, a sympathetic leader. He is the Christ who is described as having been born of Mary, having taught and healed, having been crucified and believed to have been raised from the dead and by that Resurrection declared to be the Son of God. Probably all this is not articulated in the mind of every convert, but it enters into the making of the picture of One to whom men may come for salvation. John Macquarrie is right when he asks, “Would not the cross by itself have meant the defeat of good by evil, so that it could not serve as the origin of saving events?”³ In a sense the words of Jesus are life, life for the mind, life for the heart, life for the will. But it is not just the words, separated from Jesus, stand-

ing alone. The same words printed in the loveliest volume that ever came from the press would save nobody unless behind them were the person of Jesus and the authority given Him by His life and death and Resurrection.

As the dialogue with the Resurrection continues, much enters into one's life that comes no other way. The miracle of His Resurrection makes more plausible the other miracles we need for the regeneration and re-creation and renewal of our unconscious as well as of our conscious selves. The real self of most of us lies as far out of sight of our everyday self as the physically dead are out of sight of those who walk the streets of our town. It has been neglected so long that it is almost devoid of life. What is needed to bring it to light and to its rightful role in life is something very like a resurrection. It is a task that completely baffles the strategies by which we "make converts." We have discussed that in our chapters on dialogue with the self. This discovery of the real self is a task for the God who "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." Those of us who have tried to summon our authentic self from its hiding place and its near-death know how much help we receive from the history of Him who was left dead on a Cross, but who by the mighty power of God was released from the bonds of death. We should have despaired long ago if it were not for the stimulus and encouragement of the Resurrection. Bishop Stephen C. Neill did not exaggerate when he wrote, "Only with the help of God can one discover his real self."⁴ In our dialogue with the Resurrection, we are given the faith that God can and will give that help. Where that faith is present, God does unveil what is hidden from our own eyes. The discovery of the real self begins.

Arvid Runestam writes convincingly of the "profound self-knowledge which brings salvation and liberation." Psychoanalysis, and especially the popular notion of it, often results in "a dire devaluation of one's self."⁵ It paints a picture of a self governed by instinctive drives and says, "That is you." If one replies, "Yes, it is I," one abandons the "nobleness which lies sleeping but not dead" and lives thereafter under the damning, belittling power of a deadly illusion. As Runestam incisively says, "There is something in the human soul which manages to hide itself from the practicing ana-

lyst's technical grasp as well as from the thought forms of analysis. The psychoanalytic methodology is in some ways too coarse to catch the more delicate activities in the human soul."⁶ What Rune-stam describes as the "difficult-to-define, the delicate, the tender in man" is that which we have long designated as "the image of God in man." This is awakened out of its slumber "when the most profoundly human and the divine simultaneously affect man."⁷

Where does the most profoundly human and the divine simultaneously affect man if not in this dialogue between the self and the Resurrection? Jesus died—that is the most profound and disturbing fact of our humanity! Animals die, too, but they do not know that they must die. Nor does their death have the shattering contradictions which attend the death of us who have capacities which need eternity for their fulfillment. Just because man must die, wishing that he need not die and finding in death the veto of all that distinguishes him from other forms of life, death is for him the most profoundly human experience. Jesus rose from the dead—there the most profoundly human in his life becomes the scene of the most assuredly divine operation.

He died, He lived again—that is the Resurrection! In continuing faith dialogue with that event, our authentic self, the image of God in us, is awakened. We know that we are not a temporary, fortuitous concursus of genes and plasma, giving rise to thoughts and loves and dreams, which will with incredible haste arrive at a grave and "be a brother to the insensible rock . . . which the rude swain turns with his share and treads upon."

One of the most thrilling stories of the American frontier has to do with the annexation of Oregon. Not only was there serious question as to the possibilities of that land beyond the Rockies: there was also a conviction as to the impossibility of migration thither. Forbidding mountain passes, dangerous rivers, fierce wolves, and hostile Indians threatened anyone who attempted the journey. When Marcus Whitman stood before President James K. Polk pleading for the annexation of the state, Daniel Webster, the secretary of state, registered strong objections. "How could you get to the Oregon country? No wagon could ever cross the Rockies." "Mr. Secretary," replied Whitman, "I have taken one across!"⁸

We are so often intimidated by the Great Divide which separates us from the Great Beyond. We are inclined by contemporary skepticisms and by the seemingly fierce and destructive veto of death, to accept the grave as the final boundary of our love and our thought and our activity. Accepting that, we accept a belittling appraisal of ourselves as organisms with instinctual behaviors which for some reason include what we call virtues, but which are really only animated dust; "dust thou art, to dust returnest."

But in our dialogue with the Resurrection, we are confronted with the fact that one like ourselves, Jesus, nevertheless had an experience which mere dust cannot have. In that confrontation, we seem to hear a Divine Voice saying to us, "You think no person can survive the crossing you call death? Listen, I have taken one across."

In that dialogue we come to a fuller appreciation of self, as something capable of eternal life. Only when we reach such knowledge of self are we in the presence of our authentic self. And that self demands of us nobler objectives and more heroic efforts to reach those objectives than could be expected of the self with which mere psychological analysis acquaints us.

The inimitable D. T. Niles, one of the leaders of the Christian Church in Asia, tells of a firm of undertakers in Los Angeles (where else could this happen?) who threw on a signboard this startling question: "Why walk about half dead when you can be buried by us for thirty-two dollars?"⁹ I can think of a more arresting question than that: "Why walk about half dead when in Christ you can be made wholly alive? He was wholly dead once, but God made Him alive, not for a few extra years more but forevermore. And God can give you a life that the grave cannot touch." Our half life here is so often death-in-life, made so by our low moods, our dusty aims, our frivolous activities, our gnawing anxieties, our haunting fears! Our difficulty is that we think of ourselves as creatures which have only a snatched moment or two of existence. We see values only in what can be crowded into that frantic moment. A fresh look at ourselves in the presence of the Resurrection would change all that. We all may have so much to live for, and such a grace-endowed self with which to live, and such end-

lessness of growing selfhood in God, that every day becomes alive with glory. The Resurrection justifies a revolutionary conception of the self. *It is the event in history that leads us to our authentic self.*

OTHER ISSUES OF THE FAITH DIALOGUE

So much can happen when we live in continuing faith dialogue with the Resurrection that a volume could be written about that alone. One other result must be mentioned ere we pass along, namely, what it does for our daily communion with Jesus. Here we are confronted with questions over which theologians have debated at length.

First, what about the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels? Was He the kind of person there presented? Does He still exist? Is He still available? There are some who dismiss the Jesus of history as unknown and unknowable, and therefore inconsequential. It is the dogma of Christ, not the historical Jesus, that interests them.

Rudolf Bultmann records his opinion that "we can know almost nothing concerning the life and the personality of Jesus."¹⁰ Emil Brunner declares that "faith presupposes, as a matter of course, a priori, that the Jesus of history is not the same as the Christ of faith."¹¹ Karl Barth has only scorn for what he calls "the Jesus-cult." He is sure that it is impossible to discover what Jesus was like as a human personality and that at any rate there was only "a veiling of God in the human life of Jesus."¹² Many representatives of Form Criticism give up any attempt to recover the historical Jesus.

If these persons are right, then it is sheer and misleading sentimentalism to pray to Jesus, expect His help, talk about His presence. He is only a name, for some unknown reason applied to a point in history when the Eternal Christ made himself known. He is merely a name given to the bearer of a timeless myth! In repudiation of the historicity of Jesus, the Eternal Christ becomes a sheer dogma, unrelated to the winsome person we have known as Jesus, and only adventitiously associated with Jesus through a historical accident.

That I do not believe! Nor do many others whose knowledge of history and whose theological competence is much greater than mine can ever hope to be.

Even Paul Tillich, whom many consider far to the left in matters of historical criticism, labels as an exaggeration the statement of Kierkegaard that it is sufficient for the Christian nakedly to assert that in the years A.D. 1–30, God sent His son! Tillich wants some concreteness. He finds it in “the power which created and preserved the community of the New Being.” That power “is not an abstract statement about its appearance” but “the picture of him in whom it has appeared.” He sees at least “an analogy between the picture and the actual personal life from which it has arisen.”¹³ Because of that Tillich writes: “With Adolph Schlatter, we can say that we know nobody as well as Jesus.”¹⁴

D. M. Baillie of St. Andrews, in his scholarly book *God Was in Christ*, declares that “the actual portrait of the historical Jesus is equally indispensable” with the apostolic preaching about which we are hearing so much these days, “connecting these claims firmly with the historical reality.” He adds: “If it is true that no man can say Jesus is Lord except in the Holy Spirit, it is equally true that no man can say it in the truly Christian sense, except through a knowledge of what Jesus actually was as a human personality in the days of his flesh.”¹⁵

And now comes Gunther Bornkamm of the University of Heidelberg and hailed as one of Europe’s leading New Testament scholars, in a book which is receiving high praise from a variety of American scholars—John Knox of Union Theological Seminary, Amos Wilder of Harvard University, Sherman Johnson of Church Divinity School of the Pacific. Bornkamm affirms that without “the history of Jesus before Good Friday and Easter,” “the Church would have been lost in a timeless myth, even if for some irrelevant reason or other, she had given the bearer of this myth the name of Jesus.” And again: “Quite clearly what the gospels report concerning the message, the deeds, the history of Jesus is still distinguished by an authenticity, a freshness and a distinctiveness. . . . These features point us directly to the earthly figure of Jesus.”¹⁶

To talk about Jesus, revere Him, find our interpretation of Christ in what Jesus was, is therefore not uninformed sentimentalism but sound historical and theological realism. *Jesus was, then!*

JESUS THEN AND NOW

But what is Jesus now? Where is He? Can there be any personal relationship with Him?

The answer lies, first of all, in the fact of the Resurrection. If the man Jesus died on the Cross, and after death became just another spirit in the world of spirits, enshrined in memory only, with a niche in history comparable with His influence on after centuries, then the possibility of a personal relationship with Him is no greater than the possibility of such relationship with all those "who died in the Lord" and now "rest from their labors."

But our faith does not assign Him to such a status!

The importance of a continuing relationship between the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience is recognized even by those whose theology represents a departure from that to which many of us still give allegiance.

Paul Tillich, for example, is concerned about "the disappearance of Jesus from present experience and his transition into the past except for the limits of memory." He recalls the plight of the disciples after Calvary. In Jesus, they had been confronted with the "New Being." His death seemed to be a denial of the New Being or its destruction. But in the Resurrection, he says "the concrete picture of Jesus of Nazareth became indissolubly united with the New Being." So Jesus is present "wherever the New Being is present."¹⁷

He continues:

In this way the concrete individual life of the man Jesus of Nazareth, is raised above the transitoriness into the eternal presence of God as Spirit. This event happened first of all to some of his followers . . . then to all who in every period experience his living presence here and now. . . . The finality of his physical separation from historical existence . . . is identical with his spiritual presence as the power of the New Being but *with the concreteness of his personal countenance*.¹⁸

D. M. Baillie differed from Tillich in many areas of thought, but he was emphatic about the continuing relationship with Jesus. Note the following:

His life was the very life of God Himself, and yet was at the same time in the fullest sense, the life of a man.

[After His death the disciples] discovered, first, that the divine Presence of which they had become aware while their Master was with them in the flesh, had come back to them, and was going to continue, in a far deeper and more marvellous way, in a way that was independent of his actual presence in the flesh, though not independent of his having lived on earth in the flesh.

Their second discovery was that this experience which depended entirely on Jesus, need not be confined to those who had known Jesus in the flesh.

If we believe in the Incarnation, we cannot possibly say that Jesus ceased to be human when he departed from this world.¹⁹

Baillie recognized the difficulty for our lagging thought presented by these facts:

When we go on to ask further questions about His life in glory, about the conditions of His continued humanity, about the sense in which he still is a man and about the relationships involved . . . the only questions that we can expect to answer are those . . . which are not speculative but practical about the relationships that are possible in the actual present between Christ and ourselves.²⁰

Karl Heim, distinguished German theologian, alive to all the issues presented by modern science, states the case with equal vigor.

There is no reason why we should not have direct relationship with Jesus who lived on earth nineteen centuries ago, for the I-Thou relationship is independent of space and time and transcends all temporal and geographical distances. So Jesus becomes our contemporary and the direct personal relation to Him is the very essence of Christianity.²¹

And now Bornkamm, to whose researches, summarized in his *Jesus of Nazareth*, reference has just been made. His certainty of the historical Jesus, expressed with all the critical caution that one would expect from a scholar who is familiar with the adventures of historical criticism, but also with deepest conviction, is really ex-

citing. Not less relevant to our time and need are his affirmations about the Resurrection of Jesus: "The resurrected and risen Christ, was for the believers *no other than the earthly Jesus of Nazareth*."²² And again: "What became clear and grew to be a certainty for the Church was this, that God himself had intervened with his almighty hand in the wicked and rebellious life of the world, and *had wrested this Jesus of Nazareth from the power of sin and death* which had risen against him, and had set him up as Lord of the world."²³ And again: "What only gradually awakens joy and jubilation in their hearts is just this . . . the crucified and buried one is alive."²⁴

So do men of varying theologies unite in affirming the permanence of the human Jesus in our experience of the Christ. It is Jesus as Christ who is our Savior. It is the Jesus of history who was the bearer of the saving Christ. The Christ who walks with us is still known to us in and through the Jesus of history. This could not be if Jesus had not been raised from the dead.

This is not a volume of systematic theology. It is rather a dialogue with the reader about the dialogue of the author with the Resurrection. The effect of that dialogue may be stated this way: If Jesus were here in the flesh, I would go to Him with the most distressing problems and the most grievous pains of body and soul; I would do so believing that I would thus be taking myself and my needs to God. I find it easy to do so now because He has suffered as I have, been tempted as I, and triumphed as I want to. He is not here in the flesh, but He is here in the spirit. Because He lives, I too may live by Him and in Him and with Him.

It would be presumptuous to attempt a justification of the prayers to Jesus which have risen from the great souls of the centuries or to rationalize the experience of his presence to which they so richly testify. That attempt will not be made by this least of all worshipers. I merely witness to what the dialogue with the Resurrection has done for them and for myself, making it seem real and reasonable to pray to Jesus and to court His company, day after weary day and night after lonely night.

Can any other reality account for such a hymn as

Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts,
Thou Fount of life, Thou Light of men,

From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to Thee again. . . .

Our restless spirits yearn for Thee
Where'er our changeful lot is cast,
Glad when Thy gracious smile we see,
Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast.²⁵

Was the distinguished Cambridge theologian, Canon Raven, deceived when he wrote:

My friend at Stoke was ill; there was a bank holiday and I could visit him. He was not alone. Jesus was alive and present to my friend as he had been to the eleven in the upper room. He was alive and present to me. As this event has been the turning point in my life, I have naturally examined it thoroughly and tested it as ruthlessly as I can. . . . I went to see my friend in an entirely normal state of mental and bodily health. He said nothing about religion; old times, old books, old comrades, of these we spoke, not of God. But it was evident that a third person was there; I do not know how else to express it. Jesus was objectively real, not subjectively realized. There was nothing strained or fantastic, abnormal or supernatural about it. Quite literally, it was as simple and obvious as if my friend had had with him a revered and sympathetic colleague who listened to our talk and influenced our every movement by the atmosphere of his presence.²⁶

All our prayers, of course, are not to Jesus. The life of prayer has great ranges in the life of God. God the Father inspires some; God the Holy Spirit, others. But God the Son, once incarnate in Jesus and forever the abiding place of all that in Jesus which has charmed the hearts and challenged the minds of men, also inspires and encourages our worship and our confessions and our cries out of the depths of our dire need and our awful inadequacies. We still hear Him say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and we come. Coming, we find Him "warm, sweet, tender even yet" and "faith has still its Olivet and love its Galilee."

Brother in joy and pain
Bone of bone was he,
Now—intimacy closer still,
He dwells himself in me.

I need not journey far
This dearest friend to see,
Companionship is always mine
He makes his home with me.

I envy not the Twelve,
Nearer to me is he;
The life he once lived here on earth
He lives again in me.²⁷

BIBLE-INITIATED DIALOGUE

The faith dialogue with the Bible becomes fruitful for destiny when we let the Bible initiate it. Our study of the book should never omit the questioning attitude of the mind. We do ourselves and the book little service when we read it with a docile spirit which accepts and submits to *apparent* meanings. Reading it in that fashion, we miss the *real* meanings. Humility is always in order when we read. But there is a vast difference between humility and docility. Humility is quest for that which is still unknown; docility is passive surrender to a claim of infallibility which forbids quest and question. Some of the greatest truths Jesus ever uttered came as the result of questions. Inquiring Thomas heard Jesus say, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . and you know the way where I am going." Promptly Thomas disclaimed such knowledge and asked, "How can we know the way?" In the answer to that question you and I today understand that "the way" is not a book of rules but a blessed and blessing person—"I am the way."²⁸ Friends heard Jesus say, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." But that was too much for them to swallow. In sheer astonishment they cried, "Who then can be saved?" Their protestation evoked the reply which you and I, rich or poor, most need to have in our journey Godward: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."²⁹ Who that ever dreams of an eternity with God, and who that knows himself well enough to realize his own unworthiness for such a destiny can fail to be grateful that some men of long ago had such a dialogue with Jesus? Only as we have

assurance that what is impossible with man is possible with God can we have any confidence about the future.

If the dialogue we initiate has such valuable issue, even more fortunate are we if we make it possible for the Bible itself to keep up a running dialogue with us. It is a great thing if we can take time every day for an intelligent and prayerful study of the book. Greater still would it be if we *made* time for such study. More of us could if we would. Equipped with a good commentary and with some leisure from work and company and with an inquisitive mind and eager spirit, the give-and-take conversation that could ensue would become a daily conversion to nobler thought and diviner action.

The Bible is not merely a book of which to inquire. It will pursue us with searching questions if we will give it a chance. That chance comes when we store its teachings, stories, parables, and pungent sayings in the memory. It is perfectly amazing how from the depths of memory will come a summons to enter into dialogue with it. In the midst of the day's activities, in the presence of decisions big and little, in meditations upon plans of action, in the society of friends, at the threat of imminent danger, there will "pop into mind," like an angelic visitation, some idea or question or warning or promise from the book that begs from us consideration and reply. We can thrust it out of mind. We can refuse it standing in our decision-making. We can dismiss it as inconsequential and irrelevant. But if we will only enter into dialogue with it, prayerfully and sincerely, it will often prove to be the crucial factor we have overlooked, the moral accent we have forgotten, the reminder of a higher choice possible in the situation, the birth of a new spirit within that will make our own thinking more reliable. It may even be the turning point in life.

Here are a few examples gathered in a life of more than fifty years in the ministry.

A young man in a Midwest town was looking ahead to a vocation that promised the fulfillment of cherished desire to serve God and man. But something came along that seemed to be the answer to a long loneliness in his soul. It also gave promise of experiences that could rescue him from a sense of inferiority, growing out of child-

hood humiliations. It was like food to famishing hunger. It was like the lighting of a fire on a cold hearth. It seemed like a holiday from the drab monotony which his days had become. It might even mean permanent deliverance from the walls that enclosed his dreams like a prison. Then one day there flashed into mind some words out of the New Testament: Be not like "Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright."³⁰ He had not been thinking about that or anything like it. He could easily have dismissed it as a freak of memory. But he paused to hold dialogue with it. As he questioned it, it began to ask questions of him. It brought into question the present fascination. The question became a new concern and a new conscience. The dialogue pointed to new directions and new decisions.

A woman was facing disaster. Her steps had taken the wrong path. It would not be quite the truth to say that she willfully had set her feet on the broad way; her day-by-day prayer had been for guidance even as the intention of her soul had been for the will of God. But neither would it be the truth to absolve her from responsibility for the fate which now stared her in the face; her heart had had more attention than her head. She, therefore, missed some clues that would have taken her in other directions. But whatever the history of the misery into which she was now plunged, the misery was there and it seemed irremediable. When the horrible reality of it swept through her consciousness, she was left speechless. Every time she tried to think, it was like a collision with a stone wall, which hurled her backward with immense pain into hopeless despair. Then one day, standing alone in her home, looking out upon a winter sky, the words, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done," came floating into her mind. Immediately her heart gave a leap, for those words represented her deepest longing. She had long been persuaded of the truth of Augustine's faith, "in His will is our peace." She could not hastily dismiss what seemed like an irrelevant intrusion into the mad misery of the browbeating present. But neither could she see at the moment what significance the words could have for her terrible plight. Certainly, she would choose God's will if it were left to her choice—but she had no choice now. "Things are what they are and consequences will be what they will be." How God's will could fit into her situation or make any dif-

ference in the outcome was not immediately evident. She felt like a helpless victim. She wondered if God also were not a victim of her mind's ignorance and her heart's folly. But the words had struck home. So she began a dialogue with them. Did she really want God's will done? Now? Even if that will meant that for her good and for the good of others affected, the dreadful juggernaut that had struck her should roll her into flattened dust? Did she love God enough to be willing to enter for His sake the hell that yawned not far away? As the dialogue continued, her love for God rose above her fears and her egocentric craving for immunity. She knew that even in the looming hell, the love for God would still be at the center of her life and would abate the torment of the flames. She knew, too, that God in His changeless love would be right beside her and that it would be better to be in hell with God than on the social throne without Him. So calmness entered the storm. There was no immediate miracle wrought in her behalf except the inner miracle of peace and courage. But in the peace and courage and commitment and humility that followed, came new insights and wiser choices. Day after doleful day, month after trying month, she found her way through thorns and briers, over mountains of icy difficulty, wading deep the dismal floods of human betrayal, and she won through to such serenity and love as had never been hers in her time of roses.

There was a minister who for more years than most men can devote to the ministry had given himself without stint to his service to the people in the communities where he lived. He had sought with much study and concern to make his sermons a real contribution to the enrichment of the lives of those who heard him. He had toiled with equal earnestness to be a faithful shepherd of the flock, calling in the homes of his parishioners and opening his study to all who needed personal consultation in their struggles with life. He had been a crusader against the social evils which harassed men and women and frustrated their search for the good life. He had read in the New Testament the stories of the healing ministry of Jesus. Many of them he could recite from memory. All of them were a part of his conception of the person and work of this Stranger of Galilee. However, it seldom occurred to him that he ought to be doing the same things that Jesus had done. But by-and-

by he let the Gospels begin a dialogue with him on this very theme. He did not thrust it aside as he had done before. This time he listened. He listened prayerfully and with an open mind. There were replies from his own experience, from his deep sense of inadequacy for the task, from his memories of quackery he had observed among some who worked in this field, from his own scientific skepticism, from his knowledge of what psychology had to say on the subject. It was a real dialogue that continued for months. The Scriptures reminded him that there is no record of Jesus ever refusing to heal anybody; that a great part of the ministry of Jesus was devoted to healing; that Jesus expected the disciples to continue doing what He himself had done; that evidently the early church had in it people with the gift of healing; that there was definite instruction as to the practice of the church when illness afflicted its members.

Out of it all came a new adventure in his ministry. Like all such adventures, it had its problems and often its perils. There were heartening successes and disheartening failures. Some of the hardest battles he ever fought with unbelief were at the altar where he stood with his hands on the head of some sick man or woman, and with his "heart in his mouth," as he faced what men call an incurable disease, and there in the silences sought to be a channel for God's healing. He would not part with the memories of those years for anything in the world, memories of bodies restored to health, of souls united with God in love, of faith coming alive in people for whom God had been only a name! *Without continuing dialogue that would never have happened.*

Professor Carl Michaelson, in an inspiring and enlightening tribute to his former teacher and friend, Professor Edwin Lewis, recalls what Lewis himself had said about his theological development. He had assumed responsibility for the editorship of the *Abingdon Bible Commentary*. "For three years," he observed, "I was under the necessity of living with the Bible daily. . . . The experience revolutionized my thinking."³¹ One cannot live with the Bible daily, effectively, without entering into a dialogue which will revolutionize not only his thinking but his living.

It is important in this as in other dialogues that one be sincere, bringing to it his real opinions, his deep convictions, his haunting

fears, his anguishing anxieties, his undisguised prejudices, his hopes and his despairs, his flexibilities and his inflexibilities, his egocentric dreams and his other-centered passions, his doubts as well as his credulities, his megalomaniacs and his provincialisms.

Someone wrote in a letter to the author: "I have discovered that there is something in me which does not want to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the authentic interpreter of God's will for me." There is something in us all which does not want to believe many things in the Bible. Those things demand a change in our way of life, and we do not relish the idea of change. If those things are true, we are on the "outs" with God; we prefer to think that we are "in with God" and that we have a claim upon His protection and care. When we declare, "I do not believe that God said that; forget it," we really ought to be saying, "I do not want to *do* that and, therefore, I am going to forget it."

One of the vivid memories of earlier years is of a member of the family on whom was being lovingly pressed the claims of God upon her life. The dialogue was soon terminated when she thrust her fingers in her ears and ran from the room crying, "I won't listen to you. I won't listen to you." *The decisive question in our dialogue with the Bible is, "Will I listen?"*

TEN

The Dialogue with Nature

There was a time when, without apology, poets carried on what they believed to be a true dialogue with nature. They listened and they learned. They waited and they worshiped. Nature spoke to them and they responded. For Longfellow, the silent river taught "many a lesson deep and long." For Shelley, the skylark was not merely a bird but a "blithe spirit," pouring his "full heart in profuse strains of unpremeditated art." For Bryant, nature spoke in various language to him "who holds communion with her visible forms," "a voice of gladness" "for his gayer hours," "a mild and healing sympathy" for his sadness. For Addison, the stars are "singing as they shine," "the hand that made us is divine." For John Hall Wheelock,

All we say and all we sing
Is but as the murmuring
Of that drowsy heart of hers
When from her deep dream she stirs.¹

There was a time when painters felt that the noblest use of art was to capture the realities of nature in color and form and to reproduce them for the unseeing world of men. They were not content to be mere cameras, copying only what lens and film could register. They wanted to be explorers, discovering what only sensitive minds can, and reporting it to those who are never more than casual spectators of woods and skies and hills and dales.

There was a time when theologians made much of natural theol-

ogy. They diligently sought evidences of God in the world. They wrote often eloquent treatises of nature as the garment of the living God, or of nature's witness to the Grand Design and the Eternal Designer behind the Grand Strategy of Evolution. They had trouble with the enormous wastage which made God look like a bungling inventor; with the cruelties which made nature appear more like a vast and bloody battlefield of forces, "red in tooth and claw," than like the nursery of a divine Father; with tigers and serpents and germs and earthquakes and tornadoes, all difficult to attribute to One who is love. Nevertheless, they argued valiantly that nature is God's handiwork and that its witness to God's presence and power and love is incontrovertible.

THE CHANGED SITUATION

The situation has greatly changed.

Some contemporary critics are inclined to dismiss much of the nature poetry of yesterday as fantasy. They describe it as a projection of the poet's own mind and moods and yearnings. They say that rivers do not teach, flowers offer no theology, woods cannot comfort the mourner, seas neither scowl or smile, earth is no altar, the sunset is no priest, the dawn lifts no canticle of praise, and grass rustles only before the wind, not at the passing of the divine majesty. We are urged to cease personalizing nature, to quit making it any other than the scientist declares it to be in his neat formulas. We are given leave to rave all we please about color and form and motion and energy, but forbidden to assume the presence of a Creator, Sustainer, Lover, who made and sustains it all.

Some artists have turned away from real dialogue with nature. They object to "wasting time out of doors." Some are imitators not inquirers, photographers not explorers, tourists rather than pilgrims, cultivators of feelings rather than connoisseurs of the spirit, cultists rather than mystics. Others seem only to be putting their own neuroses on exhibition, displaying their private rages against life, mocking in fine frenzy what man has made of nature or of himself. When British Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin saw a sculpture by Epstein for the first time, he exclaimed, "My God!" He did not mean to be profane. He was simply but rudely shocked.

Some artists seem to be administering the shock treatment to contemporary complacencies. It must be said that someone ought to apply vigorous therapy to our superficial sightseeing, our yearning for mere prettiness, our bondage to the familiar, our persistent desire "to be tickled in some itchy spot in our emotional anatomy." But that is more likely to be done by the artist who holds faithful and persistent dialogue with nature, as the great moderns are demonstrating. Of that, more later.

We do not hear as much about natural theology these days. The emphasis is upon the theology of revelation, especially revelational events. Seeking the meaning of God's action, particularly in "the mighty acts" of the Old Testament and in His supreme act in Jesus Christ, contemporary theology builds upon what seems to many to be a surer foundation. Surely there can be no regrets about that. But one must note a decline of interest in the effort to trace in the mechanisms and mysteries of nature a clear witness to the splendor and love and holiness of God.

THE DIALOGUE WITH NATURE IMPORTANT

It certainly is not hyperbole to affirm that the dialogue with nature makes a difference everywhere and always for the richer outlook on life, the greater sensitivity, the gentler appraisals, the truer horizons, the kindlier feelings, the sharper perceptions.

The scientist, of course, must be in continuous dialogue with nature. He goes into the laboratory to listen. He knows he must sit humbly as a child at her feet. He must understand what she is saying to him before he can speak with authority to her. He must obey her before he can command her. He must be a discoverer before he can be an inventor. Unless his laboratory is first an altar, it cannot be a throne of power.

In the practical affairs of common life, there has been a dialogue with nature in order that man might build a home or supply himself with food or exploit her wealth for his own ends. The tragedy is that the dialogue is broken off too soon.

Man learns that forests provide good building material and good fuel for his furnaces. Down come the forests and up go the houses.

Then come floods because there are no forests to soak up the rains and melting snows, and hold them in reserve. So rainfall and snowfall, which might have been stored-up sources for gentle rains over the dry season, are wasted in the rush of waters which devastate what might have been nourished. This waste is followed by drought because the reserves of moisture have been decimated. Had man listened to nature long enough, he would have learned the meaning of the forests which she has grown on the hills and in the valleys. Instead of deforestation there would have been wise conservation of timberland and a healthy rhythm of sunshine and rain, and a happier people.

In America, man listened to nature long enough to learn that vast lands in the West, devoted to grazing, could grow wheat and corn. So out came the plows and off came the grass and up sprang fabulous harvests. But, alas, nature was not able to tell the greedy plowman the rest of her story. That part of the tale would have informed him that wet seasons are often followed by dry seasons, and that fields robbed of the protecting cover of grasses would turn to dust bowls. The soil would then rise in great clouds, darkening the skies. Cattle would be smothered in the dust-laden air. Farms would become uninhabitable. Impoverished people would have to abandon the labors of years and move away to toil in sorrow and bitterness among "the grapes of wrath."

It is a long, sad story of devitalized acres, disinherited families, homes ruined in landslides that might have been anticipated, invasions by rodents and insects because nature's protective devices and equilibriums were overlooked by those who paid just enough attention to nature to exploit her for quick returns but not enough to let her be a fostering mother over the long pilgrimage of life.

In this era when man's attention to nature has resulted in the fission of the atom and the release of fabulous power from the wise and safe hegemony of nature, one wonders whether man has had a dialogue with nature profound enough to assure that we will not have meteorological disturbances and atmospheric pollutions and soil impregnations and crop ruins vastly more devastating than the floods and dust bowls and avalanches with which sad experience has made us all familiar.

THE DIALOGUE AND GREAT ART

Art becomes creative, alive, intense, when the dialogue with nature is carried on with patience, expectancy, and at levels which can best be described, as Sheldon Cheney does, by the word "mystic."

The earliest art with which we have made contact in the etchings on the walls of caves made centuries ago by primitive men reveals a dialogue with nature adequate to inspire reproductions which we have no difficulty in identifying.

We marvel at the fidelity with which medieval and later artists portray landscapes and life. What they did so well has become for many of us the standard by which we judge the art of today. We want pictures to be as picturesque, as beautiful, as ordered, as harmonious, as technically perfect, as representative of people and places as those that have won a place in the art galleries of Europe and America.

But modern artists do not respond to this desire of ours. Their work has other objectives and other norms. Unless we understand that, we shall be as continuously shocked as the Prime Minister was at the sculpture by Epstein, and dismiss from consideration the canvases and sculptures which are appearing at art exhibits and finding a place in our museums.

Some of this art is diagnosis, sorely needed. After a morning spent in contemporary exhibitions, one comes away with a fresh comprehension of just how twisted and misshapen and battered and monstrous and hideous human life has become for millions in our time.

Some of it is both protest and warning. Ruined cities, ravaged houses, shattered vessels, the like of which we have never seen, are pigmented nightmares spread on canvas, to awaken us out of our complacency, our worship of "success," our illusions about the moth and rust that corrupt, our idolatry of wealth, our failure to realize that our strength is not in armaments but in the armor of our spirit.

Sometimes the artist is in revolt against our dead conformities, and he resorts to all the devices by which brush and canvas can express contempt for our rigid conventions, our staid moralities,

our stifling modalities, our prim niceties, our art that is polished to death, our religions that are mere canned respectability.

Sometimes the painter who seems to be a bungler gone mad is actually a prophet who is saying to us that *we* are mad with individualism and are on the way to nothingness! One recalls Rudi Blesh's analysis of Model's cities:

The colors are gay and the cities sparkle cleanly. But there is loneliness and anguish in them. Each building has a window but never a door. You are either on the inside forever or on the outside forever. Each treeless street is a blind alley at both ends and no streets ever intersect. . . . One lonely figure will be walking somewhere. Sometimes he is the only inhabitant, or he walks alone, separated by the picture's length from the Woman. It no longer makes any difference if he is a major or a peddler, she a secretary or a prostitute. They are the last of the race!²

A painting that can say that so clearly is not to be dismissed because its houses have no doors and its streets no trees and no exits!

In all this there is dialogue with life as it is, but it is deeper dialogue than many of us ever enter into. In fact, depth dialogue is the basic concern of truly great modern art.

It is recognized that much previous art had dialogue of a sort with life, but the dialogue has been only with the surface, the shiny surface, the pretty surface of nature and people and society. The result, says the modernist, is that a great deal of art has really been more like an echo. It has reflected only the obvious and has been overnice in its selection of the obvious. It may have turned a klieg light upon certain areas, but it has seldom employed the X-ray. Because it sees what we all see and what we immediately recognize when it is duplicated on the canvas, we call it realism in art. We are at home with it. Our hearts are warmed by the recognition. We praise the artist and go home, feeling a kinship with him and a new pride in our own artiness.

But the modernist says that that is not realism at all. It is superficialism. It is sentimentalism. Nothing has happened to the artist that ought to happen in the presence of man or nature. Nor has anything happened to the viewers that will give them an introduction to the reality behind the seductive or disconcerting veil of appearance.

The new art is no more content with impressionism. It is aware that the impressionist goes beyond the copyist. He does hold dialogue with nature long enough to permit it to make an impression on him, and that impression is more than a record on the sensitive plate of an inner camera. It is an effect wrought within the sensitive soul of the artist. It is highly individual, for it is compounded of the spectacle before him and the accumulation of past experiences within him. It is nature plus the person. It is not mere reproduction but a reorganization of the landscape or the persons seen, in the alembic of the artist's soul. And it is that which gets onto the canvas.

The new art, however, calls for something more than this. It appraises the impressions of the impressionist as still only a contact with the surface of landscape or person. It asks for a dialogue that will continue until contact is made with "the essential life of the objects" to be painted. So the new artist dedicates himself to depth dialogue. What he means is what we have meant when we have talked about faith dialogue with people or events or the Bible—a faith that behind appearances lies the real; beyond what eyes see and ears hear and hands touch are the great meanings; within or around what the camera reports or the audio-tape records is what may be called the soul. It is the treeness of the tree, the tiger-ness of the tiger ("Tiger! Tiger! burning bright In the forests of the night"), the tirelessness of the mountain, the throbbing life of the meadow, the changeless music of the ever changing brook, the majesty of the menacing tempest, the peace of the lonely shore, the sanctity of the woodland flower, the "maternity of close, bare-bosomed night," the sea's invitation to eternity, the strange lure of "shadows tossed in the widening distance," the healing of white clouds floating across the placidity of the morning blue.

The great artist is he who holds dialogue with nature until she unveils the nature behind the natural, the feeling within the form, the essence underneath the existence, yea, until all this lays hold upon him in such fashion that he becomes one "who must paint, who cannot paint any other way than he does paint, is prepared to hang for his way of painting."³ He has found what for him is reality, or better, reality has found him, and he must share it with the world as he sees it, feels it, is possessed by it.

Sheldon Cheney wrote in his confession of artistic faith: "If

mysticism is the constant struggle to pierce behind the veils that hide us into the petty world as it accidentally is, then the new art cannot get along without mysticism; but the new shape does not lie in the direction of that *shallower* mysticism which plays prettily with the veils that hide the heart of life."⁴

A distinguished sculptor and friend deplors the dilettantes who essay some twaddle with nature, succeed in arousing a mood, fling their paint or wield their chisel recklessly, employ some bizarre techniques and "think they have got it."

The communion of the artist with nature must have something of the dimension of the communion of the lover with his beloved or of the saint with his God. Otherwise, what emerges will be as shallow and superficial and distorted as the love letter of a flirt or the glib testimony of a religious sentimentalist. There are too many artists who have only flirted with nature or have only dumped some of their own neurotic amorousness onto their canvases or into their stone. It is not to them that we look for leadership in modern art. The men and women of promise and of revelation are they who are both lovers and mystics. They woo and wait and yearn and court and implore. Their whole soul goes into their eyes, and their eyes gaze with all the intensity of the seeker after the beloved. They are humble but expectant, hoping that an answering "yes" may come soon or late and that the revelation will possess them.

The experience of each artist is unique and individual, just as the experience of the beloved or the experience of God. It has something in common with the experiences of others just as every lover and every true worshiper shares something with all others who have wooed and worshiped. But it also is his and not another's. It is ineffable and incommunicable. The cry of his heart is that of the Christian mystic:

O could I tell you, ye surely would believe it!
O could I only say what I have seen!
How should I tell or how can ye receive it
How till He bringeth you where I have been.⁵

The lover, questioned about his awesome devotion to the woman of his heart, can but reply: "If only you knew her as I do. But, of

course, you cannot, and I cannot communicate what can only be experienced."

So, a strange pang is born with the rapture of the artist's experience—a pang that longs to share with the world but is aware that the sharing at best can be only fragmentary. Art is therefore a struggle to do the impossible. The greatness of the artist is measured by the degree to which the vividness of his experience is mated with the mastery of the media through which he seeks to suggest to his fellows something of the reality that has communicated itself to him.

To those who have not waited upon nature as he has, the flames and colors and shapes and lines and structures and ensembles through which he is trying to communicate will seem strange, meaningless, even idiotic, just as the lover's poem or the mystic's hymn seem fanciful if not ridiculous to one who has never been in love or has never "seen the Lord high and lifted up." But summarily to reject either is really being ridiculous!

Wisdom calls for hospitality to these efforts to communicate what to the communicator is pregnant experience, patience in seeking the meanings that are involved, and readiness to become acquainted with the terminology employed.

It will help us to enter into something of the meanings that have broken in upon his consciousness if we will realize that he is using another vocabulary than ours in his effort to communicate. He is under the same difficulty that confronted the men who first entered the world of music and sought to introduce their fellows to it. The sounds they employed were not the sounds that were familiar—the song of the birds, the hum of the bees, the bleat of the lamb, the moo of the cattle, the roar of the lion, the babble of the brook, the whisper of the night breeze. Somehow, they stumbled upon the notes of the scale and found in them clues to the experience that had laid hold upon their spirits. It could not have been easy for them or for those who first listened. But it was the beginning of what is to us a means par excellence of communicating the deepest realities. The "Moonlight Sonata" may not tell us anything about the moonlight, but it does tell us something wonderful that words cannot. If it had been played to some men thousands of years ago, they would have been as confused as we are now when we are

confronted by the forms the artist uses to convey to us what has happened to him in his dialogue with nature.

If, therefore, we are to catch something of the artist's vision, enter his world, share his insights, it is as necessary for us to become acquainted with his vocabulary of light and color and structure and space and mass and line as it has been for the race to become acquainted with the musical scale, harmony, and counterpoint in order to share in a measure the experience of a Beethoven or a Brahms or a Wagner.

One day I encountered in an art exhibit a canvas titled "Nude Descending a Staircase." I struggled with it for a while, but could not decipher its meaning. It was to me only a jumbled mass of miscellaneous items, none of which had any significance. It was to my untutored gaze the ultimate of absurdity, the absolute nadir of art, if not an intentional hoax. Recently, I discovered that Mark Tobey, himself a modern, had a similar reaction. He said it looked to him like an explosion in a shingle mill, and he dismissed it as nothing more. Then came experiences in his own career, which, he said, "were enough to turn any creative heart into an organ without blood." The next time he saw "Nude Descending a Staircase," it seemed full of the sorrows of man—"It's the Crucifixion, I thought."⁶ So an artist had at last found in the apparent confusion and chaos of another artist's picture a clue to the confusion and chaos of Black Friday and the tragedy of his own life.

What makes the situation even more difficult is that it is not only the experience of each artist but his vocabulary that is unique and individual. The same forms and flames and colors and thrusts and structures mean different things to different artists. It is therefore quite important that we should become enough acquainted with the artist to know just what he means by these media of expression. That should not dismay us. We have to do the same with theologians. One man says "God" and means love, mercy, forgiveness, grace; another man says "God," but he means wrath, judgment, retribution. John Wesley said to a preacher of his day, "Your God is my Devil." Some of us could say to some of our contemporaries, "Your Father in heaven seems to me to be only an amiable grandfather." It is often necessary to know something about the man who says "God," before we can be sure what he means by

the word. The same thing is true of the artist. Does his green say self-satisfaction? His white, pregnant silence? His huge, uncompromising space, anger? The plunge and thrust of his lines, violence? His chaos, fear or feverishness, as someone avowed of Cezanne? We can be certain only as we know that artist through his works, his life, his philosophy, his health or sickness, his successes, and his failures.

Lots of trouble, to learn all that? Yes. But so it is to discover what the great in all arts and sciences and religions are trying to communicate to us. Did not Jesus say, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"?

But what to those who find? Ah, this
Nor tongue nor pen can show.⁷

Sheldon Cheney, art critic and enthusiast with regard to the newer art, is nevertheless very discriminating as to the artists who call themselves artists; "like every other movement [it] gathers about itself a sad company of hangers-on, charlatans, pickpockets, primitives, decadents, dadists."⁸ He says that most cubists "end up with only a sterile intellectual puzzlement or a flat, rather uninteresting decoration,"⁹ and that the futurists "give only a portrait of civilization as it has become, snapshots of the noises and jerks and squirms of the external world we live in."¹⁰ Such men and women have cut short, if they ever had, depth dialogue with nature, that mystic encounter of the soul within and the soul out there, which makes great art, whether ancient or modern, a revelation and a rapture.

All this has been written, not to pass judgment on the theories or achievements of contemporary art. That is not the function or prerogative of a layman like the author. It is rather to say that the dialogue of the best contemporary painters with nature is exciting. It is also an example to the rest of us who jauntily resign nature to the mercy of the camera and make no effort to find her "essential life" in her manifold creations. It is still true that "to him who in the love of Nature holds communion with her visible forms, she speaks a various language."¹¹ Not to hear that language is to im-

poverish ourselves quite as much as if we never listened to great music or read a great book.

THE POET IN DIALOGUE

Not all poets will be laureates of nature, of course. Undoubtedly, many who have attempted to be have only succeeded in betraying themselves. They have imputed to nature what has been merely their own feelings in the presence of nature. They have not had a real dialogue, but have carried on only a monologue. They have talked, but not listened. Or they have listened only to the more sonorous voices; the whispers and overtones have been entirely missed.

Some have "listened" with their eyes and ears and nostrils and all the organs of sense. They have listened also with their minds and hearts. They have replied, too, sometimes with their voices, sometimes with their yearnings, sometimes with their avowals and dedications, sometimes with further questions. They have been stimulated, informed, chastened, inspired, endued with love and faith.

Garnet flame that flickers
Among notched leaves,
Heart shaped, dimpled with gold
Where sunlight cleaves
The arching woods and finds
The answering spark—
Wild berry, small and dark
And glowing with all succulence,
Pungent and sweet,
Here is a spoonful of sunshine
I can eat.¹²

Now turn to Elizabeth Barrett Browning:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries.

The first poet had a partial dialogue with nature. With percep-

tive eye she sees shapes and colors. Her metaphors are beautiful and descriptive and surprising.

The second poet is also aware of colors and shapes, and berries too! But she sees heaven in every corner of the earth and God in every flaming bush.

Not every dialogue with nature results in conscious contact with God. Whether it does or not depends in part upon the faith or lack of faith in the participant. If one believes in God, it may happen that one will testify, "He speaks to me everywhere."¹³ But not always, because one is not always listening for God with a sensitized consciousness. It has happened that they who did not believe in God have in some intercourse with nature become aware of Him and have bowed their heads in awe as they knew faith being born at the very center of their being. If they are poets, it will bring a new dimension to their lines. Thereafter, all their poetry will have a depth and a tenderness and a vitality never before in evidence.

The significance of dialogue with nature has other dimensions for the poet than its contribution to his faith. What is meant by that perhaps can best be said by a quotation from Archibald MacLeish, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. In his *Poetry and Experience*, he is writing about John Keats, whose "humanity is so broad it can be compared only with Shakespeare's." He says: "The fact is Keats had a truer sense of the tragic than any poet since Shakespeare and precisely because he took a sharper delight in the loveliness of the world. . . . To taste the human tragedy one must taste at the same time the possibility of human happiness, for it is only when the two are known together in a single knowledge that either can be known."¹⁴ It was because Keats knew the loveliness

. . . on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt-sand wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies

and felt deeply that

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know

that he could at the same time feel and communicate the tragic element in life:

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd
A burning forehead and a parching tongue,

and

The weariness, the fever and the fret
Here where men sit and hear each other groan.

A DIALOGUE FOR THE PREACHER

The dialogue with nature will mean much to the preacher. He may be familiar with poems about nature. He may quote them frequently and perhaps effectively. His congregation may listen with thankful hearts for such an oasis amid the barren sands of theological deserts. But it is often quite evident that, although the preacher has read nature poems, he has not spent much time with nature herself. The poems are a homiletical first aid for drought in study and pulpit. They are not evidence of personal pilgrimage to nature's shrines or of personal encounters with nature's enchantment or of personal communion with the soul that dwells in forest or mountain or shady dell or windswept prairie. Real dialogue will beget a wisdom, a homely beauty, a winsomeness, a majesty in preaching that does not come easily if at all in any other way. Nature is not merely a fruitful source of illustrations; it may be an influence that pervades with fragrance all that the preacher may say or do.

Bishop William Alfred Quayle was called the "Skylark of Methodism." He was more. He soared like a thousand-year-old monarch of the forest. He sang like the celebrated Falls of Lodore. He captivated like a glorious landscape. He illuminated the gloomy hemisphere of life like sunshine falling on darkened meadows. There was something about him that ministered to tired congregations on a hot day like bracing mountain air or like cooling breezes from the billowing ocean. He loved nature and lived with it and brought its balm and blessings with him into the pulpit and the sickroom alike. Listening to him was like watching flowers bloom, or majestic trees bending with the wind, or sunshine and shadow chasing each other across the valley; like hearing refreshing rain sweep the dust from the meadows and cornfields to cool the aching throat of rural life. He lived with nature until nature lived in him and spoke through him. He even refused to let the caretaker of his Kan-

sas home cut down what we call weeds. He wanted nature there in all her freedom and abandon and wild beauty. He loved nature and nature seemed to love him and informed his ministry with its own unique vitality and virtue.

Father Andrew, one of the most engaging pastors and preachers and mystics of the Church of England in this generation, wrote one day: "We in our imperfect lives have surely all known times when in the loveliness of dawn, or the radiance of sunset, or the silence of the forest glade, the uncreated Beauty has come through to us."¹⁵ He found himself invited again and again to address artists of all kinds, painters, musicians, actors, of many different theological complexities and many without any accepted beliefs at all. When he spoke to them, it was of the beauty of the Lord our God. Having held dialogue with nature and its beauty, he was sure that the quest for beauty should bring us to some vision of the Beauty of God.¹⁶

William Barclay in his stimulating *More New Testament Words* calls much-needed attention to the frequency with which the Greek word *kalos* appears in the New Testament. Its rightful translation, he avers, adds to the idea of goodness the idea of beauty, loveliness, graciousness, winsomeness. It is saying to us that the Christian life should have charm, "hold fast to that which is lovely." Its goodness should be, not repulsive but attractive. Its warfare should have the quality of chivalrous gallantry. Its service should be "service with a smile." Its teaching should even at its sternest be lifting not depressing. Its witness should be radiant. Its stewardship should be gracious. How transformed are all the passages just cited when the word, *kalos* usually translated "good" is given its rightful interpretation—beautiful, charming, winsome, gracious, sunny, lovely, selfless!¹⁷

That translation is more likely to be understood and prized and proclaimed by the minister who opens his soul to the artistry and music and magic of the divine life

Spreading out in beauty, rising up in song,
Flowing forth in rhythm, reverberant and strong.¹⁸

Paul the Apostle was a great soul, no doubt of that—heroic, broad-visioned, devoted, ready to die for Christ and his people, gladly sharing the sufferings of Christ for the world, emancipating

the church from the bondage of legalism, saving it from becoming a cult and launching it out on its world-wide mission, writing the greatest epic on love, himself constrained by the love of Christ who dwelt within him in such fullness that he could say, "No longer I who live but Christ who lives in me." After Christ, he was the greatest Christian. We are all unpayably in his debt.

But one misses in him something that dwelt so richly in Jesus—an elemental beauty, an unfailing tenderness, a gentleness with sinners, something that South Americans call *simpatico*. Could one reason be that Jesus spent more time with nature? To one man at least, to walk among the flowers and to watch the birds, and to feel the relationship between shepherd and sheep, and to respond to the wonder of the sea and sky, and to seek God among the hills and beneath the stars, as Jesus did, does something for a life that is not done by city streets and market places and courts of law, which were the environment of Saul of Tarsus. Such a man will be more likely to think of God in metaphors of love than of jurisprudence. He will be more apt to be strong in tenderness and tender in strength. He will feel more keenly the beauty of holiness and the holiness of beauty. He will weep over the city instead of rage against it. He will be simpler in his profundity and more winsome in his wisdom.

In our day, a new hymn was introduced into *The Methodist Hymnal*, "Into the Woods My Master Went." Not a few voices were lifted in protest. They said the hymn was out of place in any hymnal, especially among the hymns of the Passion. It was denounced as unscriptural and unreal. One churchman wrote to the *Methodist Review* ridiculing it in scathing terms. We feel differently about it now, do we not? It witnesses to a truth, namely, that between Jesus and nature there was a real rapport. Nature taught Him that there is a brooding tenderness at the heart of things, feeding the sparrow, clothing the lilies. He went out to her in the crucial hours of His life—to the desert when He was settling once for all the strategy of His mission; to the mountain when He was about to choose the Twelve; to another hillside when He was facing the Cross and needed assurance that such a death was God's will for Him. So it was not wild fancy which inspired the poet to write

Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame

Paul went from a prison cell to the block. He could not first go to the woods. One doubts if he would have done so if he could. The countryside to him meant robbers to outwit, rivers to cross, hardships, hungers, cold, exposure, sleepless nights. One wonders if he ever noticed the birds except to contrast their flesh with that of men, or to bewail the mistaken worship which idolaters bestowed upon them. One wonders, too, if, as he journeyed, he ever really saw the lilies on the hillside. This is not to find fault with him. Who could be so presumptuous? It is only to say that he missed something and to affirm that every preacher will miss something important if he does not give nature a chance to enter into dialogue with him. And so will everybody!

EVERYMAN'S DIALOGUE WITH NATURE

Dialogue with nature is not for painters and poets and preachers only. Nature calls to us all, with an offer of enrichment. Unfortunately, the call is too often unheeded or misunderstood. Sometimes it is because of a too exclusively rational or critical spirit. When that is present, there is no sunset glory seen, but only a refraction of light-rays mathematically calculated. There is no ode to the skylark, but merely a notation of vibrations in the air caused by an organic reaction in a bird's throat. There is no poem in a tree, but merely a contact of seed with the soil and sunshine, and a mysterious organization of cells.

Sometimes this lack of dialogue with nature is the result of the fact that Americans have never learned that nature is anything but an arena for sightseers. Every year several million Americans travel away from home either to foreign lands or to unknown places in their homeland. Why? According to the *Saturday Review*, it is to gaze upon "the shining spectacular," or to acquire status by visiting the Riviera, or to search for fun in the South Pacific. Some go to Paris for exotic food reported to be awaiting tourist money; some, to add to their personal kodak triumphs; some, to find adventure in lion hunts; some, to immerse themselves in historical associations; some, just to escape from themselves, their job, their

ennui with life itself. But in all this journeying, there seems to be little sense of pilgrimage to a shrine; no anticipation of a "summit conference" with nature at her best; no giving nature a chance to speak to one's self-importance or thing-mindedness or corrupted sense of values or harried obsession with the glammers and clamors and rivalries and vanities of one's neighbors.

Happily, there are common folk who do know what a dialogue with nature can be. Amos Wilder seems to be speaking truly when he writes, "the poorest peasant has a fuller chance for the imperative elements of psychological health than one of the mass men or the sophisticated, individualistic urbanites."¹⁹ Not because of his poverty merely, but because he lives nearer to nature and is not so beset with gadgets and machines and advertisers and their wares that cannot look to nature or listen to her voice. "The more machinery intervenes between us and the naked forces, the more we numb and atrophy the sense."²⁰

One need not live on a farm or journey to the show places to hold dialogue with nature. If one can look at a tree or tarry before a sunset sky or bend over a growing flower or listen to a bird song, he is not shut away from the dialogue. Alice Freeman Palmer, one-time president of Wellesley College, told some children in a slum school in Boston: "Every day stop before something beautiful long enough to say, 'Isn't that b-e-a-u-t-i-f-u-l!'" That is the beginning, pausing to recognize beauty or grandeur or mystery in form or color or sound and letting it sink into, and take possession of, your very self. Ask how it came to be, what may lie behind it. Abandon yourself to its life. Get away from your habitual take-for-granted attitude. Let yourself be a mystic for a while. Recall what the great philosopher said when he affirmed "the presence of infinite in everything that is finite." Muse upon the presence of God in that experience you are having. And listen; listen with your senses; listen with your imagination; listen with your heart; listen with your longing for that which fadeth not away; listen with your loneliness; listen with your frustrated dreams; listen with your restlessness; listen with your sorrows; listen with your desire for immortality; listen with all the unfinished part of you!

Elizabeth Gray Vining, in her blessed little volume *The World in Tune*, recalls one of her times of listening:

Once when for long months sorrow had clamped tight my heart . . . I woke in the morning to the sound, I thought, of rain on the porch roof, but when I opened my eyes I saw that it was not raindrops making that soft and playful patter but locust blossoms falling from the tree above. For a fleeting second my cramped and stiff heart knew again the happiness that is of the universe and not of itself and its possessions, and, like Sara Teasdale when in similar circumstances she heard the wood thrush through the dusk, "I snatched life back against my breast, and kissed it scars and all."²¹

You, too, will have your answers. They will be reminders of things forgotten which never should be erased. They will be revelations of what you ought to be. They will be clarifications of the mind. They will be softenings of the heart. They will be birth pangs of new resolutions. They will be inner assurances that come like the stirring of earth under the warm suns of spring. They will be ideas emerging like buds upon the branches in May. Strange it all is—but wonderful! You will begin to realize what some meant when they called nature the handmaiden of God. If you will reply and on that and other occasions listen again, the dialogue will continue with growing significance and helpfulness.

Postlude

Volumes could be written about dialogue, its deeper meanings, its wider scope, its day-by-day and person-to-person role, its relevance to the events and associations and aspirations of our common life. This book is merely suggestive, not exhaustive in its survey. It comes out of life and is offered to life as a humble but, it is hoped, a significant contribution to life's emancipation from recurring illusions, and its enrichment in truth. It has been kept close to the sidewalks of life so that readers may realize that it is not the evolution of a private fancy but an interpretation of experiences which all may share. It has also never been out of sight of the altars where men weep over their sins and sorrows, sigh in their tragic loneliness, confess their doubts, wrestle with the mystery of their own selfhood, seek the wisdom so needed in their relationship with others, cry for answers to the inevitable woes attending this pilgrimage through time, pray for guidance in their crusade for a better world, aspire for conscious communion with the living God.

The realization of our destiny requires a creative relationship between sidewalk and altar. What we do and resolve not to do, where we go and refuse to go, our speech and our silence, our associations and our isolations, our understandings and our trust in the presence of mystery, our courage "amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing" and our confidence that ultimately "all things shall be well and all manner of things shall be well"—these are the stuff, under God, out of which the fabric of destiny is woven. And these in turn are determined by the intelligence with which we build our

altar, by the character of the God we worship there, and by the fidelity of our worship.

It is because the kind of dialogue suggested in this book is so significant for both sidewalk and altar, that we dared to call it *Dialogue and Destiny*. We hope that what has been written herein will make clear why we affirmed in the opening paragraph that "without real dialogue, we shall miss our destiny." If any of our readers are inspired to begin a real dialogue with themselves, their fellows, events, the Bible, nature, we shall be grateful to Him whose patient and redemptive dialogue with us has been and will be through all eternity the theme of endless doxology!

In Thy Light, O Christ, we shall see Light. Not in some lofty, ineffable experience . . . but here and now in this crowded and confusing world . . . with all its imperfections, difficulties, disillusionments. . . .

Teach us to endure that same pure Light in its convicting holiness, shining on our whole life; showing us up to ourselves in so far as we can bear it; casting its quiet radiance on our disorder, hardness, selfishness—all that we keep in the dark, shaming us by its revelation of our shabby secondrateness, our self-occupation, our instability, our shirking of sacrifice, our lack of generosity and zest. . . .

Penetrate these murky corners where we hide memories and tendencies on which we do not care to look . . . that you may purify and transmute them . . . the persistent buried grudge, the half-acknowledged enmity, the bitterness of that loss we have not turned into sacrifice, the private comfort we cling to, the secret fear of failure which saps our initiative and is really inverted pride, the pessimism which is an insult to Your joy.

And then cast the ray of Your Truth on all that love and goodness You put in our way and which we have passed by and hardly noticed; the friend we never fully valued; the devotion we took for granted; all the sum of small joys and beauties which outweigh the sorrows and the ugliness of which we make so much. Show us Your creation as You see it, and know it to be very good; and add to our abasement and penitence the gift of thankfulness, and make Your slaves the children of Your Light.¹

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2. I Corinthians 15:14-20.
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